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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Vera Lysenko, Ukrainian Canadian: The Expression of Her Dual Heritage in Her Life and Works

BY

Alexandra Kruchka Glynn ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1993

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Jan 22, 1993

I am a part of all that I have met;...
Though much is taken, much abides;...
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Tennyson, "Ulysses"

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled VERA LYSENKO,UKRAINIAN CANADIAN:THE EXPRESSION OF HER DUAL NATIONALITY IN HER LIFE AND WORKS submitted by ALEXANDRA KRUCHKA GLYNN in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

Janice Williamson

Janice Williamson

Paul Hjartarson

Frances Swyripa

Frances Swyripa

This work is dedicated to

the memory of my immigrant father

HREHOR KRYVORUCHKA
(George Kruchka)

and to

my mother

ANASTASIA PETRYSHYN KRUCHKA

ABSTRACT

Vera Lysenko, though as yet neglected, has a place in Canadian literature alongside such authors as Grove, Salverson and Ostenso. A second generation Ukrainian Canadian, she was also an early prairie feminist who wrote mainly on immigrant and social themes. Although Lysenko receives some critical attention in literary histories, and in specialized studies such as Carol Fairbank's Prairie Women--Images in American and Canadian Fiction and Dick Harrison's Unnamed Country, a more complete evaluation and criticism of her work is yet to be done. As well, to date there is no documented biography of the author. What exists is a deficient portrait of the author and her works. With this in mind, and having gained access to materials never before made public, this thesis will use information from published sources, materials found in the Lysenko papers in the National Archives of Canada, personal papers held privately, and interviews with her family and associates to reconcile Lysenko's art with her life experience. In doing so, this thesis will show that Lysenko was resolving her sense of ethnic identity by expressing her dual nationality in the course of her writing.

Chapter One presents Lysenko's family history and the story of her early years. This chapter is mostly biographical and covers the period prior to the publication of her first book, Men in Sheepskin Coats.

In Chapter Two the focus is on events surrounding the

publication of Men in Sheepskin Coats. This chapter reveals new information regarding the financing and editing of Lysenko's work, and discusses the resulting controversy that left Lysenko devastated and damaged her career.

The third chapter examines Lysenko's move to writing fiction. Her first novel, Yellow Boots, is discussed in the context of its place in Ukrainian-Canadian literature as well as the larger Canadian literary canon. The chapter concludes with Lysenko's and the protagonist's confrontation of their ethnic past and the move into the larger Canadian community.

Chapter Four discusses Lysenko's move to issues beyond the Ukrainian experience in her second novel, Westerly Wild, and her unpublished works. This chapter provides an overview of contents of the Lysenko papers and informs about the final years of the author's life.

Preface

Seldom does one have the opportunity to reach back to a childhood memory when taking up a task to fulfil an academic requirement. For me, this thesis has provided such an experience. Vera Lysenko is a name that has had a place in my memory since the day when, as a young girl, I first entered the Young Adult section of the Hamilton Public Library with full borrowing privileges. In that place, surrounded by hundreds of books written by authors with Anglo-sounding names, Yellow Boots by Vera Lysenko rested on a shelf. I can still feel the quickening of my heart as I recognized a Ukrainian name. I took out the book, hugged it with both my arms as I walked the distance home, feeling that I had found something special for myself.

I remember sitting on the veranda and reading the story of Lilli Landash. I forgot that I was in my own immigrant ghetto isolated from the larger "more Canadian" world beyond the ring of factories that enclosed my neighborhood. The dead-end street with its ten houses crowded together, and the train tracks three houses over, all merged into the rolling prairie coming to life in my imagination. The factory whistles, the trembling vibrations of the freight trains loaded with steel were replaced in my hearing by the sounds of wind whispering through wheat. I forgot the choking in my throat and the itchy stinging of my eyes caused by the fumes gushing fiercely from the smoke stacks as I read of the wild flowers perfuming Manitoba fields, and

I wondered about the white fluffy clouds that made pictures for Lilli Landash.

As I turned each page, Lysenko's words brought not only escape, but also familiarity. The food smells throughout Yellow Boots were coming from the kitchen in my home. The dill pickle that Lilli crunched tasted in my mouth exactly like the ones my mother made. I heard Lysenko's songs sung in my parents' voices. I felt my father's hopes for his children in Anton's wish to have educated sons. And as I read, I caught the dream that Lysenko was sharing -- that we could move outward into the larger society, and help bring all ethnic groups together, each preserving their heritage with dignity while enjoying mutual respect.

When I arrived in Ottawa to begin my graduate studies, I rediscovered Vera Lysenko. The Lysenko Papers had just been acquired by the National Archives and the childhood memory opened to the call of the academic task. As I worked through volumes of papers and spoke with dozens of persons who had known Lysenko, I found that I came to know my author as a person. She became my constant companion. The more I learned about Lysenko and her life, the more I realized that, although we were born almost half a century apart, we lived a common experience as second-generation Ukrainian Canadians. The feelings, the ambitions, the frustrations were not different after all. I felt a sense of revelation that history is a part of the present and the present is a part of the future. I understood the kinship that binds all children of immigrants.

Each of Lysenko's works is like a vibrant strand which can be appreciated and studied to determine the various hues of its individual colour. When the works are examined as a collection, in light of the knowledge of Lysenko, the person, the strands embroider together and the pattern of a response to a sense of dual national identity is apparent.

As the Canadian-born daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, Lysenko knew the struggle that extends beyond the immigrant experience. The second generation are on the fringe of two different worlds. They are born in Canada but their cultural heritage and sense of ethnic identity come from the Old World of their parents. At home, the old customs, culture and language are preserved. These Old World ties set the second generation apart from their Canadian cohorts, and are resistant to the values which intrude as a result of association at school, and with the larger, established community.

Outside the home, the second generation are attracted by the social amenities that are available in Canadian society. The experience of modern science and technology is a reality that contrasts the ignorance and superstition carried from the Old World by the pioneers. Tension increases as the pressure to conform to the dominant Anglo culture instills a sense of inferiority. Acceptance and their rightful status as Canadians is denied because they are still seen as aliens. The second generation are faced with the knowledge that, although they are of the New World, they are not wholly a part of it.

Lysenko experienced this struggle with the clash of cultures. The need to resolve the situation of being an outsider to both the Old and New Worlds was genuine. If the second generation were to attain a sense of belonging and purpose, they had to find a way to adapt to living in Canada without forsaking their ethnic past and family roots. According to Lysenko, this could be accomplished, but to do so "it was necessary for us to retain our dual nationality" (MISC 244).

Throughout her life, Lysenko adhered to this notion of a dual inheritance. She was proud to be of Ukrainian parentage, and despite the hardships and prejudice she faced as the daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, she was determined to keep her ethnic identity while asserting her right to recognition as a Canadian. The fact that Lysenko developed an awareness of particular issues through her personal experiences is relevant in understanding Lysenko's resistance to complete assimilation into the Anglo culture. She appreciated the richness of her ethnic past and sought to build on this cultural heritage rather than abandon it. When Lysenko turned to writing, like Lilli Landash in Yellow Boots, "She drew on her background to create images" (250).

Rarely, are an author's roots or an evolution in a sense of national identity so apparent as in the works of Vera Lysenko. In her early works, she intended to be the biographer of her people, but when the entire collection is examined, Lysenko's personal development is displayed in what she writes. Lysenko's major published works are threaded together by common themes and issues which are evident in her own biography. She is bold in the undertaking in that she builds on reality and works towards a particular vision of what being Canadian was, is and should be.

The process of working through the two sides of her heritage begins with the writing of Men in Sheepskin Coats, the first history of Ukrainians in Canada, written in English by a Ukrainian Canadian. She took the distinctively Ukrainian name, Lysenko, to emphasize her ethnic background. The fact that she wrote in English established that the old roots were in new soil. In writing Men in Sheepskin Coats, Lysenko deals with her sense of personal ethnic heritage while she establishes the place of Ukrainians in Canadian history, and touches on the issue of the role of the second generation in the period of transition from Ukrainian to Canadian.

When Lysenko turned to writing fiction, she was still working through the Ukrainian side of her nationality as she pulled through the thread of transition which she introduced in Men in Sheepskin Coats. The spirit of great Ukrainian authors such as Shevchenko, Franko, Gogol and Ukrainka is present in Lysenko's work as she treats the theme of exile, makes constant reference to nature, appeals to the senses, especially with detailed descriptions of food, and concentrates her attention on the situation of the farmers and the working class. The manner in which Lysenko tells Lilli's story, in her first novel, emphasizes the Ukrainian element with the liberal inclusion of folklore, customs and the honest portrayal of the harsh life of the early Ukrainian settlers.

In Yellow Boots, the focus is on Lilli Landash, the Canadian-born daughter of Ukrainian immigrants. As the plot unfolds, Lilli moves from the confines of the pioneer settlement to Winnipeg where she is exposed to a multi-ethnic community. This outward movement of Lilli into the larger community also marks the transitional point in Lysenko's expression of her own national identity. In dealing with the Canadian side of her nationality, Lysenko advances a particular vision, that of a multicultural society where the diverse ethnic groups interact with one another, while preserving and sharing their cultural heritage with dignity and mutual respect.

The shift to the Canadian side of her nationality is completed in Lysenko's second novel, Westerly Wild. No longer does Lysenko limit her work to the Ukrainian ethnic experience. Set in the Saskatchewan dust bowl of the thirties, the central character, Julie Lacoste, is of mixed ethnic background. Julie is an urban school teacher who migrates to a multi-ethnic, rural community where she uses her knowledge and talent to bring together the various groups and promote harmonious inter-ethnic relations.

Lysenko's notion of the ideal Canadian community is apparent. As the characters delve into their ethnic heritage and share their cultural legacy with their neighbours, Lysenko shows that there can be "unity in diversity" when prejudice is replaced by the acceptance of the valuable contribution that each group makes. At the same time, each individual must recognize the common experiences of an immigrant background, and accept that inheritance as an asset to be treasured. To be Canadian, as exemplified by Lysenko through her life and works, is to heed the admonition of the Ukrainian bard, Taras Shevchenko, that Ukrainians should learn about and absorb all cultures but forget not their own.

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Of course, this all started in a different place at a different time, and I thank my first supervisor, Professor Enoch Padolsky, at Carleton University, for providing me with the opportunity to begin my work on Lysenko and encouraging me throughout the early stages of my work. I hope that he will regard this as a promise kept.

I am especially grateful to Vera Lysenko's sister, Mrs. Olga Vesey, for allowing me to access private material and quote from unpublished sources. Mrs. Vesey's support has been tremendous, and I cherish the friendship we now share.

To my mother, John, Georgie, Ninan, and all my family--thanks for helping me get here.

My appreciation also goes to Jars Balan, Peter Krawchuk, Myron Momryk, Elizabeth Hudson, and Maara Haas for sharing information and making me feel welcome in the field of Ukrainian-Canadian studies, and to the staff at the National Archives of Canada and the Queen's University Archives for their assistance.

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To all my children, all my students who have let me share the vision and give me hope for "a newer world," thank you for the joy that keeps me going.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MISC	Men in Sheepskin Coats
RS	Rooted Sorrow
TT	The Torch
TCFCL	They Came From Cossack Land
WW	Westerly Wild
YB	Yellow Boots

CHAPTER I

Family Roots

The personal nature of Vera Lysenko's writing cannot be appreciated until her art is reconciled with her life experience. To date, this has not been accomplished. The small amount of evaluation and criticism which exists is based entirely on Lysenko's three major works and on fragments of biographical information, much of which is inaccurate. What exists is a deficient portrait of the author and her works, compounded by a limited perspective.

Until this time, in fact, the biographical material necessary to a complete understanding of Lysenko's personal life and public writing has been unavailable to scholars. Having gained access to those materials, with the kind approval of Lysenko's sister, Mrs. Olga Vesey, and having interviewed friends and associates of Lysenko, the writer of this thesis is now able, for the first time, to link the life and works of the author, and show that the structure of Lysenko's literary works rests on a foundation of personal anguish, conflict and determination. A detailed biography is forthcoming, but for the purposes of this thesis, only those biographical details deemed pertinent to a better understanding of Lysenko and the influences on her fiction are presented here. Much of this information is drawn from the unpublished autobiographical novels,[1] The Torch and

Rooted Sorrow, in order to acquaint readers with materials to which they might not otherwise gain access, and to permit Lysenko the dominant voice in this retelling of her life story. The focus will be on the author's personal genius and her tremendous sensitivity to the events and struggles which she witnessed.

Lysenko lived at a time when national tensions were at a peak. She progressed towards personal maturity and her own sense of national identity during a period of history that saw great resentment towards "foreigners" and their children. Added to this was the prejudice present within her own community when immigrant often opposed immigrant in the struggle for basic survival. The differences were great, and the swelling political and labour unrest erupted finally in the Winnipeg General Strike. These events, magnified by her personal knowledge of the battle against injustice, poverty, and prejudice remained with Lysenko. The impressions of the era threaded throughout her written works; they influenced her fiction and recurred in the themes which she presented.

* * *

Vera Lysenko's parents, Andrew and Anna (Mowchan) Lesik, were Ukrainian "Stundists" whose home at the turn of the century was in Tarascha, a town south of Kiev, Ukraine.[2] Their rejection of the Eastern-Christian tradition, which prevailed in Ukrainian religious life, distanced the Lesiks from the established Ukrainian community. The acceptance of Stundism was part of a rising phenomenon which was perceived to be a political as well as religious threat in late nineteenth-century Ukraine.

In the latter half of that century, the situation of Tsarist tyranny and domination by the state-supported religious authority resulted in a stimulation of the growth of the Stundist movement. Priests who were ignorant and lacking in concern for the peasants held a great deal of power over the people (Hebly 50). These priests had total control of religious learning. However, the dependence on priests for access to the Word of God was threatened by the influence of the German colonists whom the Russian government had settled on free lands around Odessa (Hebly 53) and the mouth of the Dnieper River (MISC 68). The German colonists possessed an evangelical fervour and proselytized amongst the Ukrainian people. The colonists gave the Ukrainians copies of the New Testament and invited them to attend the "Stund" or hour-long meeting from which the name of the movement is derived (MISC 68).

The Stundist movement was strengthened when the abolition of serfdom in 1861 opened the opportunity for greater freedom to travel. The result was that converts to the new religion were soon found in all the villages in Eastern Ukraine (MISC 68).

The Stundist lifestyle set its followers apart from other villagers. The Stundists were serious people who emphasized the need for self-development and had a zeal to witness to the Gospel (Hebly 53). N. S. Lekov's novel The Unbaptized Pope[3] makes reference to the Stundists as being responsible for the creation of a completely new stimulus to the religious life in Ukraine (Hebly 53). Lekov referred to them as "a sort of hermits living in the world" and described them in this way:

> . . . somewhat puritan by nature, but each one was able to read and write. They used this knowledge to read the Word of God. Human tradition, to which the clergy was so tied, they considered spoiled and degenerate. They lived purely and set an excellent example in domesticity and industry. (Hebly 53)

Because they perceived the Stundists to be a threat to their authority, the priests made accusations against them and the Stundists fell victim to the brutality of the ignorant police (Hebly 54). These events drove the Stundists to separate from the state church and form their own fellowships. The Stundists were abandoned by the German colonists who believed that assistance to the converts was detrimental to their own position. Estranged from the state church and alone in their determination to worship as they believed, the Stundists fell under the influence of the Baptists (Hebly 55).

The political implications were inevitable. The people turned to the religion as a way of dealing with what they perceived to be real problems:

> The peasants felt that they were being oppressed and exploited by the "pahns" (landlords) and the priests. As they had no other sources of enlightenment, except the Bible and Psalter, they sought information there regarding social and government ills which flourished under the Orthodox Church. (MISC 68)

The Orthodox Church and the government launched a strong opposition against the Stundists, because the movement "was actually a revolt of the people of the Ukraine against the domination of the decadent Russian State Church and against any kind of autocracy" (MISC 67).

The authorities reacted by forcing the Stundists into a kind of invisibility. Because they could not go to the priests whose authority they challenged, the Stundists were unable to register births (Hebly 59). The law of 1879 which officially recognized Baptists did not apply to the Stundists, and in 1893 a law forbidding the Stundists to hold church services or to organize schools was enforced (Hebly 59). Passports and birth certificates had to indicate membership in the Stundist sect. Anyone who hired a Stundist was subject to high fines, and a Stundist was not allowed to take an Orthodox believer into his employ. The Ministry of Travel collected the names of members and posted a list in railway stations so that the Stundists could no longer travel. The punishment for infringement of the law was exile to the Caucasus for five years. The purchase or rental of real estate by Stundists was not allowed. Severe restrictions were placed on the association of Stundists.

If they were found in the company of others during Bible reading and prayer, they were to be arrested and, in accordance with administrative form, exiled immediately to Siberia. Stundist preachers were condemned to hard labour in the Siberian mines. And, at death, the Stundists were denied the dignity of a funeral service and burial in the sacred soil of the cemetery (Hebly 60).

In Men in Sheepskin Coats Lysenko reports the events of the late nineteenth century, events which were also a significant part of the Lesiks' family history:

> Widespread arrests, fines and imprisonment of the Stundists began, as severe as that exercised against political revolutionaries. Under this terroristic regime, the Stundists began to flee to distant countries--Caucasus, Turkestan and Siberia. From the Jews, the Stundists had heard of America. They learned that people there were not persecuted on account of their religious faith and that settlers were permitted to go there. Many groups came to settle in Kentucky, Virginia and the Dakotas, and finally came to Canada. Here they settled in Winnipeg and Dauphin in Manitoba; Wakaw, Aralee, and Radisson districts of Saskatchewan, and Leduc in Alberta. (MISC 68)

Like many other Stundists, Lysenko's family were regarded with suspicion and they feared for their safety and the future of their families. Lysenko's parents, as a young married couple, longed for security and the opportunity to raise children in an environment that would be free of persecution and constant fear. Anna and Andrew Lesik knew they had to leave their home. There was no safe future for Stundists in Ukraine and so the Lesiks participated in a carefully drawn plan of flight.

In 1903 Andrew Lesik and his wife's four brothers set out together and left Europe, passing through Poland and Germany. Anna Lesik went with the rest of the Mowchan family on a route through northern Russia and left Europe through the Baltic port of Riga. The separation was deemed necessary in order to trick the Tsarist secret police and to ensure safety (TT 550).

After several months, Andrew Lesik was reunited with his wife and other family members in Winnipeg, where the entire group settled with great hope for the future in a house which the family built themselves on Point Douglas (TT 559-560).

Life in their early years in Canada was not what the Lesiks had anticipated: "Employment agencies exploited immigrants. Men perished of hunger right on the streets of Winnipeg" (TT 560). Like New York, Winnipeg housed immigrants in huge, awful tenements. There was a sense of dehumanization as established men regarded the new arrivals:

> . . . pointing to healthy immigrants, arguing, appraising, looking out for groups of young men they could hire in works they owned, buying men as though they were cattle, approaching young women for prostitution or for work as domestics in swell houses in the south end. . . . It was a regular slave trade. (TT 561)

Despite the disappointment in the reality which they found in the new country, Lysenko's parents were determined to have the peace and security which they believed could exist. Andrew Lesik got steady work in a lumber yard and began to build a future for the family that he and his wife would have.

In 1910, Vera Lysenko was born, the fourth child in a family of six children. Around the time of Lysenko's birth, Winnipeg was quickly becoming a major industrial centre, and by 1913 Winnipeg held "the position of fourth industrial city in the Dominion" (Bercuson 3). The rapid growth of the city resulted in

> . . . the beginning of class division. . . . The social elite, mainly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant, gathered themselves in certain well-defined bastions of affluence: Armstrong's Point, Wellington Crescent, and River Heights. The working population, laced with new immigrants, lived in parts of Fort Rouge, northwest Winnipeg, and the "north end." The latter area was Winnipeg's "across the tracks," situated for the most part north of the sprawling Canadian Pacific yards, which stretched from Weston to Point Douglas, site of the CPR station and the Royal Alexandra Hotel. (Bercuson 4)

In the multi-ethnic, working-class district of North Winnipeg, Andrew and Anna Lesik's family occupied a humble abode which Lysenko recalls in The Torch:

> Let me paint you a picture of what an Ukrainian immigrant home was like in Winnipeg in September, 1918, just a few weeks before the end of the First World War. Our shanty was so small it seemed its sides would split with the longing, the voices, the fury, the laughter, the despair of an immigrant labourer, his wife and children. Three tiny rooms were crowded with rough furniture: a small kitchen table, covered with a red-checkered tablecloth, an old-fashioned wood and coal range, with a bulging oven door, a red cupboard in quaint style carpentered by my father, with a border of red, yellow, and white daisies, painted to please his small daughters. Besides the stove, a trap-door led to a cellar, where we had stored a barrel of sauerkraut, a basket of apples, twenty jars of

> plums and pavidlo, a crock of dill pickles, two sacks of potatoes, a dozen candles. Next to the kitchen was a small closet containing the toilet, always a nuisance to the family. A kitchen sink stood in one corner with a dim, cracked, tiny mirror above it, and a long bar of white and red castille soap on the stand. The table had been set with blue and white willow-patterned china and thick white mugs decorated with a gold clover leaf and a big bowl of varenika--cheese dumplings--had been placed in the centre. (9-10)

The Lesik home was typical of immigrant cottages of that era. David Bercuson's Confrontation at Winnipeg and J. S. Woodsworth's My Neighbour present similar domestic scenes. The poor conditions which Bercuson and Woodworth describe in their works were the reality of Lysenko's childhood.

During her early years, Lysenko had a keen awareness of her family's struggle to find social acceptance, when suddenly "another type of immigrant was arriving" (Bercuson 4) in Winnipeg. The new immigrants were less "foreign" because of their "Anglo-Saxon background and Protestant religion" (Bercuson 4). Unlike the Ukrainian immigrants, these British immigrants were skilled tradesmen who left the crowded English and Scottish industrial cities "in search of better opportunities in the promised lands across the Atlantic" (Bercuson 4). The new arrivals from Britain introduced a significant change in attitude regarding the position of labour:

> Many believed deeply in the principles of trade unionism and labour political action. Some were socialists, others advocates of industrial unionism or syndicalism, but most shared a desire to put the lessons they had learned to good use; these were the men who soon formed the elite of

> union leadership in Winnipeg and the west.
> (Bercuson 5)

Life, then, became much more complicated for Winnipeg's immigrant working class. Suddenly, skilled tradesmen were in direct competition with unskilled Ukrainian immigrants and children for jobs which required them to work under sub-standard conditions. Added to this was the uncaring outlook of the employers: "Most shop and factory owners automatically assumed that labour was just a commod[it]y to be paid for on the basis of market dictates" (Bercuson 5).

In The Torch, Lysenko recalls how the Lesik family, like many immigrant families in the North End community, suffered serious hardship during this period. Lysenko's father no longer had a job at the lumber yard; he was mistreated by his new employer. Immigrants like Andrew Lesik received no understanding. The effort of the man, his usual good performance on the job and his long years of service were not acknowledged; instead, he had to deal with the humiliation of being labelled a foreigner and was denied the opportunity to earn even a meager living. Lysenko saw the blow to the man's self-esteem, the wounded pride when he felt unable to provide for his family. She felt that "something of my father's life dream had vanished" (TT 26). For Lysenko, the economic crisis was compounded by the dread of the nearby tenements. She feared that her family "would be crowded in with the people . . . in those dark rooms full of rats, with the outside stairs where people go who have no hope, where every month the death wagon calls from the city to pick up those who died of hunger" (TT 17).

Along with the fear and intense sense of insecurity at home, there was the revelation that Andrew Lesik was not alone in his trouble. Lysenko became anxious as she heard the prediction that soon there would be an eruption on the labour scene which would alter radically the lives of all the immigrant workers (TT 17). She listened as a neighbour spoke passionately about the plight of the immigrant worker, especially under the bullish camp boss, an Englishman named Ed Stevens (TT 21):

> . . . Came the lesson. Ed Stevens meant what he said. He was hard as a slave driver. The bunks were hard, cold. The food--you could hardly eat it without vomit. Meat is needed for a man doing a job that nearly kills. But the meat was tainted, and I choked on the pie. Flies. Mosquitoes. Swamps. Fever. Dysentery. Tiredness. Men were working with torture in their souls. Pants full of shit. Weak in the stomach. Hot in the head. Sweat stinking from the armpits. Feet hot in heavy shoes. Muscles strained and faces red. Came a dreadful July day. In that long line of workingmen--Ukrainians, Poles, Greeks, Roumanians, Germans, Italians--I know not from what country of the world--not one face was not tanned dark by the sun, and sweat poured like water. The sun, like a molten ball of lead, lay heavily and hotly in the heavens above, and scorched us, and I wiped my brow and prayed for deliverance. And I was the second heaviest man there, and regular as a clock, with no letups. Then suddenly one man dropped dead. A cry of rage, a howl of worry rose from the men, but the foreman was furious. . . . (TT 22)

The impact of the words stung Lysenko. For the rest of her life, she would remember "Solidarity--that's the word" (TT 25). She was a daughter of the working class, and her own future was dependent on the united efforts of the North End workers.

At the same time that Lysenko was realizing the economic hardship and the struggle of the immigrant workers, the effects of war were becoming apparent in the neighbourhood. Each day, Lysenko saw the growing number of black armbands worn by her classmates who had lost their fathers in the war (TT 27). Distant battles claimed the lives of heroes who left families behind in Winnipeg. For many of her schoolmates, dreams of higher education were wiped out as their widowed mothers were reduced to the level of begging for work along the streets in order to feed their starving children: "The strength and vigor and hope and comfort and security of our North End was being drained off and the victims of the war were legion . . ." (TT 27).

Of significant note, in The Torch, Lysenko concentrates on women as victims of the war. In the chapter "To Those Who Have Fallen in Darkness," Lysenko recounts the stories of the widowed, of young women broken by grief and girls ruined by returning soldiers who used them for sexual pleasure without thought to the results (TT 27-37). Numerous pages are devoted to the telling of the stories of female suffering, but there is no mention of the returning wounded or men who had served at the front.

In late November, 1918, "a pall of fear hung over the streets" (TT 39) and a different kind of battle occurred as an influenza epidemic spread through North Winnipeg. The threat of disease was felt strongly in the Lesik home. The neighbourhood's dreadful situation of overcrowding and poverty made it particularly difficult to deal with the epidemic in the North End. Families who were crammed into small, often dirty, houses existed on inadequate diets. Many homes lacked supplies of fresh water or proper sanitary facilities. Lysenko's father recounted the horror of the neighbourhood tenements where absentee landlords refused to remedy the deplorable conditions. The result was inevitable. The toll was high. Lysenko watched as funeral coaches came more frequently, black satin streamers marked houses in mourning, and the common sound was that of mothers screaming in grief for lost children. The spectre of death was always present. This was part of the heavy price, the bitter lot of many immigrants to Canada (TT 41). In the midst of the dreaded epidemic, Lysenko fell ill. She developed a raging fever and lay near death. During her long convalescence, Lysenko's sister Eugenie gave her a gift of orange paper and a white writing pad, and Lysenko produced her first book, "The Story of the Fish Who Wanted Everything":

> You can imagine the pondering, the sweep of a child's imagination, the calling into being of other fantastic creatures, the busy scribbling of pencil on paper until this tale became an accomplished fact and emerged, somehow or other on fine white paper, and then was bound, with the help of the family, into its orange cover, and shown about to all the neighbours. (TT 50)

Through her creative endeavour, Lysenko was able to free herself from a sense of confinement. She enjoyed the praise lavished on her efforts and felt new strength and communion with her family. However, this period of contentment was brief. Increased social and political tensions in the community overshadowed family activity. Soon Lysenko's escape from death seemed less dramatic than the history which was about to be made around her.

During the war years, many Ukrainian immigrants who had lived in Austrian-occupied regions of Ukraine were regarded as enemies and forced into internment camps. Any Ukrainians not interned faced severe restrictions "and had to report to the police every week (or even twice a week) as 'hostile elements'" (Krawchuk 36). As the war drew to a close, the hostility and anti-Ukrainian activity did not cease. In September 1918, the activities of worker-farmer progressive organizations were banned (Krawchuk 36). Members of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party "were arrested and imprisoned or else put into concentration camps. Some were deported back to the old land" (Krawchuk 37). The print shop of Robochyi narod, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party's newspaper, was subject to police raids, and "a great deal of literature, letters and documents from the archives" (Krawchuk 37) was confiscated, destroyed, or lost forever (Krawchuk 37).

In November 1918, ex-servicemen began to return to

Winnipeg. This caused a further crisis. The veterans wanted jobs but the country was experiencing an economic downturn. The returning soldiers were met by high unemployment. The situation became explosive: "In Winnipeg, . . . the local branch of the Great War Veteran's Association demanded that enemy aliens be fired and deported" (Bercuson 87). Groups of soldiers made stops at various establishments and insisted "that non-Canadians be dismissed" (Bercuson 87). Veterans began to form angry mobs and violence quickly erupted. Individuals were beaten; property was vandalized. In The Ukrainians in Winnipeg's First Century, Peter Krawchuk records:

> Attacking the Prosvita Reading Society premises, the hooligans smashed all the windows, destroyed the library and theatre costumes. The damage was listed at $7,500, which, for that period, was a large sum of money. . . . There was also an attack on the Ukrainian Labour Temple, which was still in the process of being built. . . . an angry mob of veterans marched into North Winnipeg in an organized pogrom. (37)

These happenings were painful for Lysenko. She was a perceptive child and realized that, although she was Canadian born, she too could easily find herself the object of such hostility. The period following her illness brought no relief from insecurity.

In 1919, Lysenko witnessed events which left a permanent impression on her, and made a significant mark in the history of labour in Canada. Western Canadian workers were increasingly dissatisfied with economic conditions.

The roots of the discontent predated the war. "At a time when the cost of living had risen by 70%, wages had gone up barely 18%" (Krawchuk 37). Business speculators exploited the situation. Workers had not reacted well to policies of conscription and censorship. Organized labour recognized the situation and was influenced (Krawchuk 37). As the month of April wore on, the labour unrest was growing increasingly worse. On the streets of Winnipeg, scenes of sinister happenings were played out. Toughs began to appear as a threat to the workers who were uniting to protest the intolerable conditions. Tensions were at a high when a bulletin appeared in the daily press which caused the wrath of the North End workers to explode. A "Citizens' Committee" which was opposed to the idea of a strike placed the advertisement which read:

> Get out of town, FOREIGNERS! All those who were born in foreign countries should be deprived of all their property and sent back to Europe, and their claims against this country cancelled and all their legal rights taken away. We do not tolerate troublemakers who are provoking riots in the streets, are in favour of destroying private property and are arousing decent workers to revolt by lies. Get rid of them before they ruin our country. (TT 61)

Many of the North End workers who were of foreign origin had hesitated about joining in a strike but the hateful advertisement caused a furor and Lysenko's incensed neighbours could no longer hold back.

On May 2, 1919, the metal workers went out on strike; soon they were joined by workers from all over Winnipeg. In

The Torch, Lysenko recalls:

> There was a stream of angry men on the street. Every kind of worker on earth was there, every nationality, English, Scotch, Irish, Ukrainian, Russian, Pole, French, Yiddish, Spanish, Italian, Bohemian, Serb, Swede, Icelander. From the four corners of the earth they had come to build Canada. . . . The whole North End was on the move --the eruption of a vast immigrant bowl of labor which the lordly profiteers had exploited too cruelly and had supped too richly on the profits--and the effects were to be staggering on world labor. I saw them in the street, and my childish soul was stirred to the root. (*TT* 62)

Lysenko felt a sense of direct involvement and she observed the transformation as ". . . faces of immigrants changed and became more assimilated with a common cause. The strikers were no longer European, and they served a just cause" (*TT* 71). The Winnipeg General Strike had a great impact on Lysenko, and prompted her later involvement in pro-labour organizations such as the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association. Throughout her life, Lysenko remained conscious of her working-class background. All of her works, fictional and non-fictional, at some point show sympathy for the struggling masses.

Shortly after the strike had subsided, Lysenko suffered a tragic loss. The one strong emotional bond in her life was her "partnership" (*TT* 75) with her younger sister, Nadya. The sisters bore a strong resemblance and were close in age. Lysenko felt a oneness with her little sister (*TT* 75), and when Nadya met with death in a streetcar accident, Lysenko was devastated. Together, Lysenko and

Nadya had been united, but suddenly ". . . I was alone, at nine years old, and stripped of my fun and my gladness, because the older children did not respond to me, they were out for a bigger share of life . . . and I would have no protection of a little girl's love and need for me . . ." (TT 77). Lysenko's best friend was gone. A feeling of isolation and solitude developed as grief intruded into the Lesik household. Lysenko's mother withdrew in mourning; her father, weighed down by the burden of coping with his own sense of tragic loss, while attempting to tend to the family needs, often retreated in silence behind a newspaper (TT 83). Lysenko felt that she was alone and caught in the fallout of emotional crises. In later years, Lysenko had difficulty portraying close family relationships and happy childhood.

For Lysenko, the early years were filled with pain and little joy. She had to develop her own survival mechanisms. Lysenko found escape and kinship on the prairie (TT 84). The elements of nature were her playmates. She drew strength and was stimulated: "Nature was the most splendid teacher I was ever to have, and I gloried in her lessons . . ." (TT 88). She absorbed the beauty of nature and used it to cushion the agony of the times, and as an impetus for learning.

As a child Lysenko was unusually bright. She was "a beautiful girl with long yellow curls, lovely brown eyes, and a keen, enquiring mind."[4] When an older neighbourhood friend named Isabel took Lysenko to school "to show her off," the teacher, Mrs. Potter, was moved to invite the child to continue to attend.[5] Lysenko had an insatiable hunger for knowledge. Her early interest in school was the natural result of her genius and the emphasis on education in the Lesik family. Learning came easily to Lysenko and she was determined to become a genuine scholar. Mrs. Potter's invitation to continue attending school was readily accepted, and the problems of the North End dissolved temporarily as Lysenko spent an increasing amount of time on study and the reading of books. Every Saturday morning she would take a place at the low round tables in the Children's Department of the Carnegie Library and ponder the volumes containing ". . . fantastic stories which appealed to a distressed child who had to live so much in the world of the imagination" (TT 127, insert 2). On holidays she would retire to the tiny playhouse that her father made, and spent long afternoons enjoying her favourite copy of Hawthorne's Tanglewood Tales, and other stories that were like magic for her (TT 157).

Lysenko's retreat into books brought her comfort. She grew confident of her place in the academic world. The more she read, the more she learned, and her performance at school was consistently excellent. Lysenko's parents were delighted by her scholastic progress and her commitment to education was a bond between Lysenko and her father. For her twelfth birthday, Lysenko's father brought home "a monumental size ledger (used by a bookkeeper in his firm)" (TT "Attic Memories" 2) which contained hundreds of unused pages. The gift was intended to encourage her scholarship. Lysenko used the ledger to record private entries of favourite poems, sketches and observations of her experiences as a growing girl.

The practice of keeping a journal caused Lysenko to develop greater awareness of the situation at school. Until that time, Lysenko had enjoyed certain privilege as Mrs. Potter's favourite and the excitement of learning new things had captured her full attention. However, when she set down on paper her observations about her personal growth, her vision broadened. Lysenko began to scrutinize the influences, events, and problems which surrounded her at school.

At the age of twelve, Lysenko recognized the significant role of the teacher. Although she realized that the beauty of music and literature taught at school sustained her and soothed her schoolmates, Lysenko saw that the teachers had no genuine understanding of or sensitivity to the serious problems of the North End children:

> But the beating of a child's frightened heart she did not hear; the yell of a kid who was beaten by a strap in the hands of an angry and overworked father she did not take cognizance of; the appeal for a chance to confide in her by a girl so scared by the problems of puberty that she sat desolate

> and weeping straight through literature class, she impatiently averted; the problems of growing youngsters who seethed with impatience and lies and deceit and hell in their brain she did not understand; the inability of an overworked girl who had been misused as a dru[d]ge by her family to respond to the nobility of great poetry was met by her with scorn. . . . So the literature class, sponsored to help growing youth in meeting the demands of immigrant fathers for a chance at higher education for their offspring, fell short of expectations . . . and the singing class, where music soothed and charmed, failed to register the proper response in the girls especially . . . and a sinister force, operating in subterranean channels, to frustrate, dismay and thwart growing ambitions of adolescents, was permitted to grow unchecked, until finally disaster threatened almost every girl and boy in that turbulent community. . . . (TT 161)

Lysenko's sense of class consciousness was awakened. She saw that children of immigrants received no support within the school system. The students from the North End were not accepted readily and the stress that the pupils experienced was tremendous. Truancy was high among the North End students (TT 155). They were caught in the clash of Old World and New World cultures and values. Prejudice against the children of immigrants was a reality. Expulsions were numerous (TT 155). Minor infractions often resulted in the maximum penalty of immediate dismissal. Older boys desperate to find work as trained workers crammed themselves into desks that were too small and received "the instruction of foolish, ill-trained women who catered to the desire to best these 'foreign devils' by beating the daylights out of the kids" (TT 155). Lysenko witnessed the common occurrence of the oldest children in families being forced to drop out and find work in order to help ease the family's financial plight (TT 155). She was appalled at the stories of child labour that she heard her schoolmates relate. Many girls were forced to take jobs in order to help out financially at home (TT 164). At the age of twelve, Lysenko concluded that most of the North End girls would be sacrificed (TT 170). Few females would ever realize the dream of higher education, and many would break physically under the burden of toil; some would even perish in the struggle:

> And so, interwoven with the memories of the beautiful songs we had been singing in our music class, were threads of discord, disappointment, aching hearts and tragedy. . . . The girls of this period in Winnipeg's North End had sad destinies, many of them . . . and the Grim Reaper strode among them, demanding a life here and a life there . . . and yet there was among us, daughters of immigrants, such a yearning for music, for poetry, for the chance to reach out beyond the narrow confines of our homes. . . . (TT insert 1 before 174)

Lysenko felt sympathy for the girls who would not have the opportunity to continue their schooling, but she herself was secure in the knowledge that she was destined to go on to university. Unlike the other students from her background, Lysenko received the assurance of her teacher that her future was promising. Lysenko felt deep concern for her schoolmates; however, and she was determined to make an effort to draw the student body together in better understanding. The children of immigrants were considered to be socially unacceptable and the opportunities for full participation in school activities were limited. Lysenko sought to break down the barriers of isolation. She put together a class newspaper and reported events of interest, recognized individual achievements, shared Ukrainian recipes and included creative works of poetry and stories (TT 175). The newspaper was well received at school and Lysenko's confidence in her own abilities was bolstered.

In The Torch, Lysenko recalls that when she was fourteen years old she went to Saskatchewan to spend the summer with her grandmother, and those months left a permanent impression on her and did much to give her direction as a writer. Lysenko recognized her grandmother as a spontaneous poet: "Granny was a true folk poet and words came easily to her when they dealt with the earth and sky and their denizens" (TT 289). The turmoil of North Winnipeg was miles away as Lysenko listened to endless hours of her grandmother's accounts of the early days in Canada: "Something of the grandeur of pioneering life got into my blood that summer and remained forever after" (TT 249). Her grandmother imparted "the warmth of family, solidarity" (TT 149). The effect of the visit was one of genuine edification: "But I was gathering strength and resilience from my Granny and the tight clutch of poverty loosened and I saw there was a way out for me and I was not alone, but had a tradition behind me" (TT 254).

Lysenko's grandmother spoke strongly about the hardships of serfdom and confided that she had a dream of having a writer in the family, someone to preserve in words the plight of the Ukrainian people. From her aunt Nadya, Lysenko heard the family history. Her aunt prodded Lysenko's heart and conscience. Aunt Nadya and Lysenko's uncle Terence Mowchan described the persecution that the family had suffered because they were Stundists. They spoke of the family's determination to pursue knowledge wherever possible, and of how they were punished by the authorities because they were suspected of receiving and reading books. Lysenko's aunt charged her: "You alone will remain to carry the torch our family lit in the Ukraine. You are destined to be the biographer of all our adventures" (TT 299-300).

During the months that Lysenko spent in Saskatchewan, she received the positive reinforcement that had been lacking in her life. She was given the strength of family history and tradition and the challenge to preserve the ideals by writing. Lysenko came to see that her role was to be the champion of the oppressed. Lysenko gained new insight into the circumstances of immigration and the hardships faced by the immigrants, and she felt compelled to bring this awareness to the reading public. In The Torch, Lysenko records the impact of her visit to Saskatchewan:

> The movement of immigrants--which was to be a dominant theme in my writings in later years became a reality, and I was conscious of the big push from betrayed countries by young adventurers who travelled thousands of miles to find a new home. . . . My visit to Saskatchewan had given me

> a strong impetus in the direction of storytelling, poetry and history which culminated in mature life with several volumes relating this great Canadian epic. (TT 363-364)

In September, 1924, Lysenko entered high school. On the first day of classes, she was placed in the Grade Eleven honours class (TT 367). She astonished her English teacher with her knowledge and ability. Despite the fact that Lysenko achieved an academic standing of over 95%, the highest in the class, and first in Manitoba (TT 388), she had to endure constant "sneers and snubs" (TT 384) at school. Lysenko was a member of the immigrant, working-class community, and therefore regarded as inferior. The harassment and discrimination directed at the Ukrainian students went unchecked by the school authorities. Many teachers were of the opinion that "it is not worth educating children of the lower class" (TT 417). Lysenko found the situation difficult to endure. She joined a group of Ukrainian students to protest: "First, against being called foreigners. Against being all lumped together as undesirable. Against being stigmatized as reeking, violent Galicians" (TT 393). Lysenko was disturbed as she saw talent smothered, students with great ambition fall as casualties in school tragedies, and violence inflicted against many of her cohorts (TT 401-412). In reaction, a swelling of pride rose amongst the Ukrainian group which Lysenko had joined and they became more militant:

> It's the whole cossack host on the march to glory,

> in defence of liberty. It's our desire to hang on to one identity, to keep from being swallowed whole. Our colour, our dance, our music and drama--everything we brought to Canada to be undervalued? We're just tame, colourless, uncultured folk, forever doomed to hewers of wood and drawers of water? No! We protest! Young in heart--all of us are--but old in experience of life. We've all been poor and called unclean and deprived and too thrifty for our own good. . . . We assert our right to education, culture, a high place in our country's history. (TT 394)

Lysenko was sustained by the united determination of her associations. They would not yield to the pressure but would persevere in the quest for recognition and the opportunity for advancement through a post-secondary education.

In 1925, at the age of fifteen, Lysenko began studies at the University of Manitoba. She had achieved superior standing in high school and was awarded the University of Manitoba scholarship. For Lysenko, the years at university were complicated by the tension caused by her academic ambitions and her personal situation. She came from a background where basic survival was a priority and the display of fine clothes and status symbols at university were a sharp contrast. Lysenko was younger than the average student and not prepared for the worldliness that she encountered. Activities such as modern dancing were new to her "and although my physical being was aroused, I was not prepared for the fury of the sexual rhythm which was far beyond a person of my tender years" (TT 435).

At university, the prejudice was more severe and

Lysenko witnessed the humiliation of the North End students. Her sense of outrage swelled. She wanted to challenge the misconceptions about her class. Lysenko tried to bring a fresh interpretation to the material studied, but her views were often perceived as radical because Lysenko saw from a different perspective. Although she regarded herself as a scholar, Lysenko felt a kinship with the oppressed peasant and the struggling immigrant worker (TT 618). Bitterness rose within her as she thought of the failure of the academic world to acknowledge the plight of the working class:

> . . . hatred and disillusionment had set in for me: hatred of upper class snobbery which blindly refused to see the coming plight of Canadian workingmen . . . disillusionment at the meagre fare dealt out by the professors in the senior honors literature courses which I was taking, their sneers, their dullness, their spite for me, their lack of challenge, their failure to interpret the spirit of the age properly. (TT 634)

Attitudes of intolerance were firmly entrenched within the established academic system, but Lysenko's strong academic performance contradicted the preconceived opinions of students from the North End.

Despite the difficulties encountered, Lysenko did exceedingly well until the last year of her studies. Over the years, Lysenko experienced increased emotional stress at school. At home, there was tremendous upheaval. Lysenko's mother became pregnant and had a son at a time when all the older children had moved on to adulthood. Lysenko had difficulty in defining her relationship with her new brother. The age difference between the siblings placed them in different generations, and in time, Lysenko became more of a surrogate mother than a sister to her younger brother, Peter. The alteration in the family situation created new problems and Lysenko, a person who was driven by emotion, found it difficult to handle the combination of domestic tensions and academic pressures. In the last year of her studies, Lysenko became ill and could not cope. For weeks, Lysenko occupied a small room that her mother had arranged to be Lysenko's private place. The time was spent retreating into the world of literature, which was her constant source of strength and stimulus for thought and creativity.

When Lysenko received her B.A. (Honours) in 1930, she was one of the first Ukrainian-Canadian women to obtain a university education, and on the day of convocation, Lysenko made the solemn dedication:

> This will be my aim--to remain steadfast. Shevchenko had no home, anywhere, no marriage, and was a wanderer over the Russian Empire, and forever an exile? Franko was harassed by debts, almost blinded, driven mad with persecution? And yet he wrote as he saw the suffering and enslavement of his people, "I cannot rest, my bed is one of cinders?" Torture was their part, but immortality their reward. They stand first among the Ukrainian people for their heroism, but they will not be the last to make a stand. I now dedicate my learning, my gift and my pen to continue the advancement of ideas and progress in our country. I shall read to you one fine pronouncement of Ivan Franko, and thus conclude:

> Give me the fire that turns words into
> torches,
> Fire that can sear people's souls give to me,
> Fire that serves truth--and injustice
> scorches,
> Passion's white heat! (TT 637)

Driven by the sincerity of her convictions, and the realization that she must leave home if she was to attain her goal to become a writer, Lysenko, like many of the characters in her works, imposed her own form of self-exile.

After she left Winnipeg, Lysenko held numerous occupations in order to support herself. She first went to Alberta where she was a nurse and high school teacher. In 1936, Lysenko moved to Eastern Canada and there she worked as a saleswoman, teacher, factory hand, night school instructor, domestic servant, research clerk, and journalist. As a single woman, Lysenko knew the difficulty of trying to survive on low wages. She experienced the exploitation of female workers who were paid less than their male counterparts, or forced into ghettoized industries, such as the garment trade. In 1936, Lysenko wrote an expose, "The Girl Behind That 'Bargain'" (Chatelaine, October, 1936)[6]. The article revealed the deplorable situation which existed in the garment industry; while huge profits were amassed by the companies, the female employees were paid starvation wages.

Lysenko's personal experiences as an outsider to the Ukrainian community because of her family's Protestant religion, along with the facts that she felt a close association with labour because of her social class, and traditional Canadian political parties showed little concern for the immigrants and working class of Canada, resulted in Lysenko fraternizing with leftist political groups. She wrote articles under various pseudonyms and her commitment to social reform was unshakable. Her work appeared regularly in the leftist paper The Clarion,[7] as well, in 1942-43, she was associated with Ukrainske zhyttia (Ukrainian Life), a newspaper published by the pro-Soviet Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA). Lysenko did translations of French novels for the Magazine Digest,[8] and published various political articles using distinctively Ukrainian names in that publication. She did book reviews and essays for the Globe and Mail and was a reporter for the Windsor Star, until 1943, at which time she approached members of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians and asked for support to write her first book, Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study in Assimilation. The directing force in Lysenko's life and writing was her pride in her Ukrainian immigrant roots and her determination to be accepted as a Canadian without surrendering her ethnic heritage. In order to reinforce this point, Vera Lesik wrote in English but deliberately took the distinctively Ukrainian pen-name Vera Lysenko,[9] and began the cross-stitch of her life and works. Her first sense of identity was as the daughter of Ukrainian immigrants. From this viewpoint she began by writing Men in Sheepskin Coats.

Notes

[1] The details included from the unpublished material have been verified by Lysenko's family, friends, associates, or supporting documents. All attempt has been made to separate fiction from fact.

[2] More precisely Eastern Ukraine then part of the Russian empire.

[3] Cited in Hebly.

[4] Mrs. Olga Vesey, personal interview, January 1987 and June 1989.

[5] Mrs. Olga Vesey, personal interview, January 1987.

[6] I am grateful to Elizabeth Hudson for having sent me this information.

[7] A paper published in 1939-40 by the Communist Party of Canada (publication was illegal owing to the imposition of the War Measures Act). Formerly known as The Daily Clarion, the paper underwent another change of name when it became The Toronto Clarion (1940-41).

[8] A commercial publication published in Toronto, October 1930-December 1947. In 1948, production of the magazine was moved to the United States.

[9] She chose the name Lysenko because it began with the letter "L", was identified as Ukrainian, and non-Ukrainians could pronounce it without difficulty. Mrs. Vesey and several of Lysenko's associates have asserted that the author indicated these were her reasons for selecting this pen-name.

CHAPTER 2

Men in Sheepskin Coats--The Untold Story

When Vera Lysenko undertook the research and writing of her first book, Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study of Assimilation, she was making history while writing history. As a woman, she moved beyond the usual literary and academic boundaries by daring to chronicle, in non-fiction form, the movement and contribution of the Ukrainian people in Canada. She was also pioneering as the first Ukrainian-Canadian author to write a history of her people in English. Despite the lack of compiled data and accessible resource material, Lysenko was determined to carry out the work. This was no small or simple task. Hundreds of hours were spent travelling across Canada, searching through records in old Ukrainian halls and churches, and sifting through sometimes forgotten trunks in farmhouses far from progressive urban areas. Lysenko employed the skills she developed as a newspaper reporter to personally interview hundreds of individuals and then follow up on any leads that they provided. Finally, the strands of oral history were stitched into a permanent written document.

Because Lysenko was pioneering in her attempt to produce a written account of the Ukrainian-Canadian experience, there were difficulties that had to be resolved. Verification of information was often impossible because recorded data regarding much of the material Lysenko was gathering did not yet exist. This meant that she placed great trust in her family and associates as she drew on their experiences to fill out the details in the work.

The project was a labour of love for which Lysenko was willing to make personal sacrifice. Because the research and writing demanded a great deal of time, Lysenko decided to resign from her secure position at the Windsor Star. Financial support then became a crucial issue which presented a major problem for a fledgling author. Because there were no government grants available to her, and her class and ethnicity placed her outside the dominant Anglo society that might have provided financial resources, Lysenko approached various Ukrainian organizations for funding. However, because her family had abandoned the traditional Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox denominations, the Lesiks were outsiders to the Ukrainian community. Her requests for financial assistance were consistently rejected. Despite the sincere motives behind her determination to write the history of Ukrainians in Canada, Lysenko lacked the support she needed, until she turned to the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (the successor to the ULFTA).[1] Several leaders in this organization were familiar with her published work and held the opinion that she was indeed a talented writer. Her strong social conscience, firm sense of class solidary, and socialist political views impressed these leaders. They saw that, although she had achieved a Canadian university education, Lysenko's sympathies were with those whom she saw as oppressed by a system that exploited immigrants, women, laborers and farmers. She was using her intellectual resources and literary talent to promote an awareness of the inequities that she abhorred, and this moved individual members of the AUUC to respond by offering personal donations so that Lysenko could proceed with the project without financial distress.

Only in the course of my research for this thesis has the information regarding the funding and publication of Lysenko's first book come to light. Until this time, significant details were unknown. For years, it had been assumed that Lysenko conducted the work on her own and that the published version was her final manuscript. However, such was not the case.

In reality, her AUUC patrons were not only financially generous, but they also provided her with "consultants" to assist with her project. Her work was scrutinized by Ivan Navizivsky (John Navis)[2], Peter Krawchuk[3], and Pylyp Lysets[4], the latter acting as her main advisor. Lysenko felt confident working with these experienced "consultants" who shared in her desire to educate Canadians about the Ukrainians in Canada while giving Ukrainian Canadians a better sense of their own dual inheritance. Without hesitation, she drew upon their expertise and turned particularly to Lysets as a reliable source for information. The following letter, dated October 27, 1945, indicates how much Lysenko depended on Lysets to provide help and information throughout the various stages of writing her book:

> Dear Mr. Lysets:
> I am sending you a long list of questions which I should like you to answer at your earliest convenience. As you know, doubtless, I am revising my book and since most of the revisions are concerned with the press and politics, I am taking the liberty of sending you these questions.
> PRESS:
> What are the sources of your material?
> Give an analysis of the contents.
> How many Ukrainian newspapers in Canada? What are their names?
> What is their circulation? In what cities are they printed?
> By whom are they sponsored? How many newspapers have been published in Canada since the Ukrainians first came here, and what are their names? (Mr. Kumka can answer this one--he has written an article on the subject).
> How many times a week does each paper come out? What are your sources of revenue? What are your relations with the old country? Do you publish books and pamphlets as well as a newspaper? What is the set-up in regard to the staff? How many on staff, and what in general are their qualifications? How many hours a day do they work and do they have any other duties? How would you estimate the influence of Ukrainian papers in Canada?
> Kindly give some characteristic excerpts from editorials.
> Kindly give a brief biographical note on Shatulski.
> Kindly send me the issue containing the story of Popovich.
> Give me a brief account of the socialist Ukrainian press during the early days (before 1918)[.]
> Kindly send me your two anniversary calendars.
> What do you regard as the main function of the press?

BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATIONS:

What are the assets of your B.A.?
Give me figures regarding business done by the People's Co-op.
How many members of the B.A.?
What are its extraneous activities? What are its purposes? When organized? Does it carry on social activities, sports, music, etc?
What is the organizational scheme? By-laws, etc?
How often does it hold conventions? How are finances administered?
What are its officers? Do you have summer camps, schools, etc?
Does the B.A. publish newspapers? Did it participate in war relief?
Does it offer scholarships to high school students?

POLITICAL:

What are the main political issues facing Ukrainians in Canada?

Any other information or suggestions you can offer will be welcome. I should appreciate it if you could answer these questions within two weeks.

Thank you,
(signed)
Vera Lesik

P.S. Please send 3 copies of your paper & 3 copies of Shatulski's paper.[5]

Filled with gratitude to her benefactors, and concentrating only on the fact that she had the opportunity to fulfil her desire to write an informal history, Lysenko did not see that her working relationship with her patrons might give rise to future controversy. Navizivisky, Krawchuk, and Lysets were actively involved in the Communist Party of Canada. Lysenko, somewhat naive about party politics, did not realize that by becoming involved with Communist activists she was bound to be identified with their movement. Without reservation, she submitted her completed manuscript to her "consultants" who were to forward it on for publication. However, Men in Sheepskin Coats, published by the Ryerson Press, in 1947, is an altered version of Lysenko's text.[6] A complete collation and thorough criticism of the published and unpublished texts is in itself an entire project, to be undertaken at a later date by this author; therefore, for present purposes, only a general overview and details pertinent to this thesis are included here.

Lysenko's unedited typescript, entitled They Came from Cossack Land, was more than 600 pages in length. Written in a style more like an epic novel, the informal history is divided into three sections. The first part, "Cossack Land", begins with a "Prologue" which contains some of Lysenko's most evocative writing. The author draws together the reader and the subject by appealing to sentiment in the telling of an historical event. Lysenko presents a moving description of the seekers of "a new life":

> They had little enough to remind them of the land they had left behind: a handful of the sacred soil of their native land, wrapped up in a kerchief, a few bundles of seeds, and their peasant tools, sickles and scythes to till the new earth; in their hearts, memories of a great tradition...
>
> Mute, heartsick yet courageous--how could they speak to strangers in a strange land--men who did not understand their musical tongue, who despised the bright embroid[e]ries of their costumes, who looked contemptuously upon the "foreigners" and knew nothing of their ways? How could they tell what land was theirs in the old country, to what proud traditions they were the heirs, what poets had sung to them? How could

> they speak and say from what land they had come?

Responding to her own rhetorical questions, Lysenko becomes the spokesperson for the Ukrainian immigrants and their children as she tells their story. She opens the prologue with "The men and women in sheepskin coats". These words are significant; they indicate that in her attempt to generate a better understanding of her people, Lysenko avoids a gender bias in her presentation of history. Throughout the manuscript, the writer documents the historical details and contributions made by both sexes. Her careful attention to the role played by women is a refreshing departure from the traditional androcentric approaches to history, which until recent times, often excluded female contributions.

The first part of They Came from Cossack Land contains the Old World history of the Ukrainian settlers. An opening extensive account of the Brotherhood of Zaporozhian Cossacks, "The Zaporozhian Seech," Part One of the manuscript is 73 pages in length and introduces important events and figures in Ukrainian history. The fact that Lysenko hopes to provide a clearer understanding of the background of her people is obvious in her careful attention to detail. She creates a sense of involvement in the moment, almost dramatizing the events by including dialogue along with clear descriptive scenes. Demonstrating literary and documentary skills, Lysenko succeeds in carrying the reader back into centuries long past. Personages such as Peter Konashevich (known as "The Arrow"--Sahaidachny), Bohdan Khmelnytsky, and Ivan Mazepa are seemingly resurrected as they are introduced to the reader in an immediate and thorough manner. In the sub-section, "Dowbush: Robin Hood of Ukrainian Mountaineers" Lysenko entertains while educating with this vignette about Dowbush who "half real, half fantasy, lives forever in the folk songs of the Hutsuls" (TCFCL 47). With splashes of bold colour, she embroiders a picture of the setting, attire, and dance so effectively that the bagpipe sounds of the Hutsel mountain people are almost heard. The Carpathian Mountain people's life, a contrast to that of the more familiar mode of the dwellers of the prairie-like steppes, is realistically revealed, perhaps the first such exposure for the non-Ukrainian reader.

In filling out Part One, Lysenko writes about the final days of a Zaporog; "the haydamaki," whose memory was glorified by the poet Taras Shevchenko (she elaborates, over six pages, Shevchenko's "great drama of blood" (TCFCL 52); and the tradition of the kobzars. Also included is a sub-section, "Aeneas in Cossack Land," as Lysenko winds down Part One and prepares for the transition into the New World. Tying together "The trek of the Zaporozhian cossacks to seek a new homeland" (TCFCL 66) with the late nineteenth-century migration of the Ukrainians to Canada, Lysenko cites the work of "Kotliarevsky, father of modern Ukrainian literature, first Ukrainian national democrat." Kotlyarevsky's "Travesty of the Aeneid" is "a Gobelin tapestry of Ukrainian life in the eighteenth century" (TCFCL 66). Lysenko explains that, in Kotlyarevsky's work, "Aeneas becomes a Ukrainian cossack, leader of the Zaporozhian cossacks who are migrating from the Seech;" (TCFCL 66). With great skill, she pulls the threads of "the wanderings of the Trojans in Vergil's 'The Aeneid'," as they weave through Kotlyarevsky's "Travesty of the Aeneid," and connects them with the situation faced by Ukrainians in late nineteenth-century Ukraine. Just as the Ukrainian serfs, of whom Kotlyarevsky writes, found refuge when they completed "A great exodus ...to the vast undeveloped south lands" (TCFCL 72), Lysenko implies a connection between classical heroes and the peasants of Western Ukraine who, in more modern times, found it necessary to abandon their homeland:

> Escape, where? The descendant of the cossacks looked about him desperately and far to the west, beyond the seas, a new light of hope appeared.
>
> And so he left cossack land and came to the New World. (TCFCL 73)

While filling in the background of Ukrainians in Canada, she ignites passion and pride within Ukrainian Canadians who rediscover their heritage in this first section of her manuscript. From this high point of identification with past glory, Lysenko moves on to elevate the experiences of the successors to the cossack hosts as she pulls through the colours of their story in Part Two of They Came From Cossack Land.

This second part of the original manuscript is entitled "New Breaking" and deals with the Ukrainian pioneer experience. It opens with "The Land Passion," which emphasizes the scene:

> The empty prairies were waiting...waiting to be made fertile. Across the western plains of Canada stretched a wilderness of a thousand miles. No plough had ever touched that virgin soil. It was a savage land, buffeted by the elemental powers of nature, resisting all attempts to conquer and tame it to the uses of cultivation. (TCFCL 1)

Lysenko goes on to stress the unimaginable condition of the land which "was stubborn, rock-bound, overrun by flood, heaving with muskeg, bristling with bush and treacherous with quagmire" (TCFCL 2). She writes of the settlers who fought the terrain, who had only their bare hands as tools as they tried to clear away the brush and wild roots. The images are graphic. But, at the same time, they are romanticized as Lysenko refers to:

> ...poetry in their labor--the poetry of rich, golden plump wheat-ears, the poetry of the harvest, of the changing seasons, of the rites and powers of nature, of man's love for mother earth. (TCFCL 2-3)

Despite the hardship, Lysenko portrays a deep respect for nature as she describes the early Canadian prairie life. She takes the reader through the agrarian beginnings of the first Ukrainian immigrants, but then moves on to describe the customs and folk arts which brought a touch of refinement and continuity into the immigrants' lives.

In Part Two, Lysenko methodically traces the various aspects of development of the new Ukrainian community. A large portion of this section deals with an overview of the various religious denominations which competed for "Ukrainian souls" (TCFCL 37). Also included in this part of the manuscript are matters of education and the important role of the teacher; facts and figures regarding Ukrainian publications; a short discussion of political parties and their influence on the Ukrainian immigrant voters; and informative details about industrial workers. Interspersed throughout are preserved rituals and customs described in an anecdotal fashion. Lysenko was obviously keeping in mind a readership that included immigrants and those without formal education as she wrote in a style that was easy to read and without cumbersome documentation or an inflated vocabulary.

The last short section of the manuscript, "Prairie Giants," documents the accomplishments of outstanding individuals. Although there are far fewer pages in Part Three, there is no sense that this is an incomplete piece. However, when compared with the first two parts, the brevity of the section seems inconsistent. Possibly Lysenko saw the manuscript as already being beyond an acceptable length; or, given the period in time when she was writing, there might have been only a small number of Ukrainians who had made the transition from settler to prominent achiever. Unfortunately, the mystery of whether this is actually the entire manuscript is likely to remain unsolved.

When Lysenko turned over this unedited version of her work, she thought that she had completed her task in a more than satisfactory manner. After "interviewing hundreds of persons all over Canada during a period of three or four years" Lysenko recorded, on hundreds of pages,"a broad picture of Ukrainian Canadian life over a period of fifty years".[7] She assumed that when she turned over the manuscript that it would be published quickly, but two years passed before her work went into print. Unbeknown to Lysenko, her text underwent revision. The published version is only 312 pages, including the original bibliography. The fact that Lysenko was not aware of the reasons for the delay is apparent in the following letter. Written on the stationery of the Hotel Taft, New York, New York, and dated March 3, 1946, Lysenko writes:

> Dear Mr. Navis:
>
> I am here in New York for a few days on business--am going to do a little research work in the libraries here, some publishers, etc.
>
> When I phoned you on Friday I was somewhat surprized that you people had done nothing at all about trying to get my book published. It appears to me that perhaps you do not appreciate fully the importance of having such material on the Ukrainians made accessible to the Canadian public. There is so much ignorance and misunderstanding about our role in Canadian life that I feel my work deserved your support. It seems to me you have neglected to do as much as you might have to

> assist me in promoting my book.
>
> Will you therefore, Mr. Navis, please bring this matter to the attention of your organization, and try to decide on some concrete way of furthering my work. It would be too bad if my work were wasted just because of a lack of co-operation on your part. After all I did spend two years of hard work on it and collected some valuable material--
>
> Yours sincerely
> Vera Lesik[8]

When Men in Sheepskin Coats finally appeared, it showed that not only did Lysenko's sponsors change the title and structure of the text, they made deletions and alterations to better reflect their own particular notions of how the history should be presented.

Why did Lysenko not protest the changes that were made? Perhaps, the answer to this rests in her position at the time. She was an inexperienced writer who in reality lacked any real power where publishing was concerned. Her "consultants" where already known in the publishing world, and since they had been so generous in their support of her work, she trusted that they would do the proper thing in seeing the manuscript through to publication. Also, the Ryerson Press was a distinguished mainstream publishing house and managed by well-respected individuals. Many prominent Canadian authors had titles on Ryerson's lists. Surely if the Ryerson Press had published Lysenko's first major work in the edited form, they must have felt that this was the best way to present her work to the Canadian public. In reality, even today a beginning writer does not have final say regarding the finally edited copy of their work. Add to this the fact that Lysenko was an ethnic female author dealing with the male Anglo-dominated publishing world and it is not difficult to see that even if she had protested it would only have served to defeat the publication of her first major work.

Ryerson's publication of Men in Sheepskin Coats seemed to confirm that Lysenko had achieved her goal: "to explain the great romance of migration of my people to Canada" and show how "the destiny of the Men in Sheepskin Coats was bound up with the destiny of Canada."[9] At first, it appeared that Lysenko had succeeded when the reviews of Men in Sheepskin Coats appeared in the English-language press in 1947. The work received praise from many reviewers who welcomed the book as a significant contribution to the study of Canadian history. Writer and cultural promoter John Murray Gibbon[10] extended congratulations and compliments and it seemed that Lysenko's efforts on behalf of Ukrainian Canadians were finally being recognized.

However, trouble soon erupted when the anti-Communist Ukrainian Canadian Committee, irritated by the fact that a leftist sympathizer and outsider to their community had outdone them by producing this first English history of Ukrainians in Canada, urged Watson Kirkconnell[11] to discredit the work. Kirkconnell, an influential Canadian academic with strongly conservative views, and a supporter of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, accused Lysenko of engaging in left-wing propaganda. He sent an unsolicited and sharply worded critique to the book's publishers, in which he venomously attacked Lysenko's work and made unsubstantiated allegations about her political affiliations: "An interesting combination of authentic research and Communist propaganda is Men in Sheepskin Coats by Vera Lysenko."[12] He went on to declare that "[u]nfortunately this appetizing dish is laced with political arsenic." Nevertheless, Kirkconnell admitted that the bulk of Men in Sheepskin Coats was "an excellent and readable account of the settlement of Ukrainians in Canada and their advancement in two generations to positions of affluence and distinction." While later acknowledging that the work was "an admirable summary of the Ukrainian cultural legacy," Kirkconnell also stated "the excision of about twelve pages would have left it an excellent book." Although he took specific exception to a very small portion of the material in the text, Kirkconnell's strong condemnation created the impression that the entire work was tainted.

Lysenko was inadvertently caught in the middle of a political battle.[13] The timing of the release of Men in Sheepskin Coats placed her in an especially awkward position, as she had begun work on it in 1943 when the Soviet Union was an ally of the Western Powers, but the 1947 publication occurred just after the Cold War rhetoric was beginning to intensify. Kirkconnell's critique--an edited version of which was subsequently published in the University of Toronto Quarterly[14]--stung Lysenko to the quick, and in a later, unpublished autobiographical work, she was to protest that:

> It seemed all the more shameful to me, this attack on me, the most vicious ever made on a Canadian writer, with its distortion of irrelevant facts, its aggrandizement of minutiae, its exaggeration of the least important aspects of my theses. (RS 200)

On March 9, 1948, Vera Lysenko swore in an affidavit that she was not and had never been a member of "the Communist Party, the Progressive Labour Party, the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association or the Ukrainian Canadian Association."[15] An extensive interview with her convinced Frank Flemington, one of the editors at the Ryerson Press, that Lysenko was not a Communist and that she had never intended to promote their cause. In a memo to Dr. Lorne Pierce (Senior Editor, The Ryerson Press), Flemington indicated his support for Lysenko and described Kirkconnell as a "fanatic looking for a fight." In a follow-up letter to Kirkconnell, Flemington suggested that legal action was being considered. Kirkconnell subsequently toned down his attack in the published version of his critique, but the damage was done and the allegations regarding Lysenko's political affiliations continue to persist, especially in the Ukrainian community--even to this day.

The injury to Lysenko's career and health was tremendous. She endured public humiliation, and financially, she made no gain. Her reputation as a sincere and serious writer was shattered. Disappointed by the failure to find any support "when the writer is attacked on the basis of being a little too far ahead of his time. Anyone who speaks out against social injustice is immediately suspect"(RS 204), Lysenko came to the conclusion that it is

> ...much better to be "socially acceptable", and so our writers lose the force and power which writers of other nations can wield but seems so deplorably absent in our Canadian writers. "Be on the safe side, steer clear of labor problems, shut your eyes to social abuses, and you'll be on the side of the mighty". (RS 204)

For several years, Lysenko did not publish. She was devastated by the fact that not only had Kirkconnell succeeded in damaging her personal reputation, as well as her career as a writer, but the Ukrainian community, the very people for whom she felt she was making a contribution, failed to recognize her efforts on their behalf. Lysenko would never fully recover from the effects of the Kirkconnell episode. Throughout the remaining years of her life, her physical and emotional health suffered terribly. On several occasions she was hospitalized. Genuine anguish plagued her until her final days.

In the course of time that followed the Kirkconnell episode, Lysenko made notes concerning her assessment of her own mental state and filled several notebooks with her observations regarding the inadequacies of the mental health care system in Canada in the 1940-50's. In her later years, frustrated by the fact that she continued to experience periods when she could not cope emotionally, she contemplated her situation after Kirkconnell's attack and then wrote:

> Was I so different, was my problem so unique, that no probing, even by the most skillful psychiatrist, could cure me? I was up against an impasse; my whole future was in jeopardy, unless I solved my problem. Furiously I schemed, wrote down reams of stuff which I thought had something to do with my condition, stayed awake nights brooding, re-hashing, stirring up my past. There was something, a hard, deep, hateful part of my past, which dreaded reviving, which I had avoided mentioning in all my interviews with the psychiatrist. I finally summoned up the courage to yank at it and pull it out, in all its meanness, its disaster, its injustice...(RS 196)

Like an abuse victim finally confronting the truth by releasing a repressed memory, Lysenko continues:

> On the appearance of my first book, Men in Sheepskin Coats, a social history of my people, the Ukrainians in Canada, an attack was made upon it, smearing me and accusing me of a communist bias...It was vile, unexpected, utterly unjustified, and made by a person occupying some position of authority in Canadian literary life. It was handed to me by the Editor, Dr. Lorne Pierce, and I could not believe what my horrified mind registered...
>
> Dangerous Red Propaganda Must Be Exposed... A sick feeling overwhelmed me. Fury, ungovernable, surged through me and my fingers trembled as I took up the purported review of my social history of the Ukrainians in Canada. What on Earth? I could hardly believe what I was reading. Every sickly, distorted accusation of a mean and perverted personality was hurled at me by

> a man purporting to be a disinterested scholar with a name that Anglo-Canadians respected.(RS 197)

In her isolation and agony, Lysenko had dredged the painful recesses of her memory and extracted a conclusion that explained her years of mental pain: "At last I had the answer. It had all begun the day I received a copy of the attack on my first book" (RS 197). In an era which would see many Canadians blacklisted merely on the grounds of suspicion or unfounded allegations, Lysenko was subjected to McCarthy-like treatment. She recounts how the Kirkconnell episode gave rise to speeches against her and there were attacks in the Ukrainian press. Lysenko recalls the indignity of "the foul investigation of her private life" (RS 199), and the sting of rejection when she applied for government funding so that she might continue with her work. Although she felt intense pain because of the lack of appreciation for her pioneering contribution, Lysenko did not lose her own sense of what she had accomplished:

> I reviewed the events that had led to my undertaking the long, hard task of assembling materials for Men in Sheepskin Coats. The new trails I had blazed. The venturesome journey I had undertaken across Canada, visiting the chief Ukrainian communities. The severe personal sacrifices the work had entailed. The thousands of hours of the most painstaking, exacting research, described by the Toronto Star as "staggering"...I had delved deeply into the historical background, searched out books which seemed insignificant to most people, caught various phases of activity which had seemed irrelevant until I had beautified them enormously and presented them to the Canadian people. (RS 200)

Feeling the isolation that was to be the chronic state of her life, and later a dominant theme in all her works, Lysenko records: "...I was now to be swallowed whole...The attack had been a desperate one, an unfair one by an over-talkative group against a solitary woman writer" (RS 201). She knew all along that religion had set her apart from the Ukrainian community, and her ethnicity, class, and gender had placed her in the margins of the dominant society. Despite the aching desire to end the solitude, she had lost trust in all relationships. Lysenko made a conscious decision not to reveal her conclusions to her male psychiatrist who was almost mocking in his attitude about her ambitions as a writer. Instead of offering support and recognition of her achievements despite the challenges, he dismissed her assertions as meaningless female fancy:

> "So I was to get nothing for the money I had spent. Five hundred dollars. A small fortune to an impoverished author. Five hundred dollars, for what? For advice to take up tatting?" (RS 207).

But, Lysenko was determined to keep on writing. As a direct result of the Kirkconnell episode, and seeking safety in a genre that was more acceptable for a female writer in Canada, as well as less likely to draw fire from the conservative Ukrainian nationalists, Lysenko became committed to rectifying what she regarded as a deplorable situation regarding the representation of immigrants and ethnic characters in Canadian literature:

> Seldom indeed does one encounter a character of, let us say, Slavic origin, in Canadian fiction, except in the role of an illiterate, a clown, a villain or a domestic servant. One exception can be noted: the Ukrainian Canadian heroine, Anna Prychoda, of Morley Callaghan's novel, They Shall Inherit the Earth. Yet...Anna possesses no distinctly Ukrainian traits; she might as well have been of French, Irish or Icelandic ancestry; Callaghan made no attempt to limn out the particular characteristics and problems of the second generation to which his heroine presumably belongs. The magnificent drama of migration and assimilation to Canada's Western lands of a polyglot population has not appealed to Canadian writers, mainly for the reason that consciously or unconsciously they still prefer to think of the non-Anglo-Saxon as a comic or uncouth personage, unworthy of elevation to the dignity of literary subject-material...yet Canadian culture as such will not come of age until it embraces in its entirety the manifold life of all the national groups which constitute its entity. (MISC 293-4)

Invigorated by her idealistic intentions, Lysenko ended a painful hiatus in her writing career and in 1954 published her first novel, Yellow Boots. When Lysenko turned to writing fiction she continued the expression of her Ukrainian nationality, through the character Lilli Landash. Her literary pattern was like Lilli's song and

> with this song, she paid tribute to those countless unknown song makers who had created the songs to immortalize the common incidents of their daily life, she added the hues of her own living to them, she acknowledged her debt to her own people for what they had given her. (YB 314)

In Yellow Boots, Lysenko picks up the threads of her personal experience and then, with Lilli, begins a new stitch as the second generation makes the transition from Ukrainian to Canadian.

Notes

[1] The Communist Party of Canada and the ULFTA were outlawed by an Order in Council on June 4, 1940 (see Jars Balan, Salt and Braided Bread 54-55). Therefore, in June, 1942, the Ukrainian Association to Aid the Fatherland changed its name to Association of Canadian Ukrainians, and in 1946, the former ULFA was reconstituted under the name Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC).

[2] Ivan Navizivsky (John Navis), along with Matthew Popowich, Matthew Shatulsky and John Boychuk, was one of the founders of the ULFTA. From 1911 onward, he was an active promoter of the Ukrainian socialist movement in Canada. Navis played a major role in the development of the Canadian Ukrainian worker-farmer press. He was also known for his strong administrative skills. In 1922, Navis was elected to the Central Committee of Workers Party. He became a member of the national party fraction bureau (which was responsible to the Politburo of the CPC) in 1939. Throughout his life, Navis was unwavering in his Marxist convictions.

[3] Born in 1911, in Western Ukraine (according to Krawchuk, under Austria-Hungary and later Poland) Peter Krawchuk has spent most of his life supporting leftist political causes. He was involved in the founding of such organizations as the ULFTA and the Communist Party of Canada. Krawchuk has published numerous books and articles in Ukrainian and English and is responsible for much of the early work in Ukrainian-Canadian history and literature. Krawchuk's contribution to the study of Ukrainians in Canada is invaluable. He has received awards and recognition for his work in Canada, Ukraine, and the former U.S.S.R.

[4] Long-standing pedagogue in Western Ukraine, Lysets held the position of Director of Ukrainian Schools in Lviv in the early 1900's. Around 1912-14, Lysets wrote anti-war short stories which were published in the Social Democratic bi-monthly journal, Dobra Novena (Good News). He was influential in the Communist Party of Western Ukraine while the party was still an underground movement. In 1928, Lysets was a candidate to the Polish parliament but failed to get elected. Lysets met Krawchuk at a Party election conference in Lviv, and Krawchuk campaigned with him from village to village. In March, 1928, Lysets was elected to office but faced discrimination after his election. He was invited to Canada by the ULFTA, and called to be internal inspector of the ULFTA's Ukrainian children's schools. Later, Lysets became a journalist for over 20 years. He worked alongside Krawchuk as co-editor of Narodna hazeta (People's Gazette) (Winnipeg) and Ukrainske zhyttia

(Ukrainian Life) (Toronto). Lysets also co-authored, with Krawchuk, a book Zridna Rodum. At the age of 72, Lysets died in the office where he worked.

[5] This letter is held privately. I am grateful to the holder for having made it available to me in order that I might have a more complete knowledge regarding Lysenko's working relationship with her "consultants".

[6] In 1987, the details behind the publication of Men in Sheepskin Coats were revealed, to the author of this thesis. For over forty years, Lysenko's manuscript was held privately and I am grateful to Peter Krawchuk for having granted me access to Lysenko's unpublished text.

[7] Reply to Kirkconnell deposited in the Lorne Pierce Collection, Queen's University, Kingston.

[8] This letter is held privately, and I am grateful to the holder for sharing this valuable information with me.

[9] Reply to Kirkconnell deposited in the Lorne Pierce Collection, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

[10] J.M. Gibbon, Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1938).

[11] In the course of my research I came upon many individuals who asserted that Kirkconnell was somewhat of a "Fascist." Writer Maara Haas was particularly strong in her comments regarding Kirkconnell whom she referred to as "that Fascist asshole." Haas related that Kirkconnell used his influence to secure a sizable grant to translate the works of Shevchenko into English after Haas had the project well underway. Deeply hurt by Kirkconnell's betrayal, Haas burned her work rather than allow him access to her material. Also, it was disturbing to find a sizable number of individuals putting forward the allegation that several works published as translations by Kirkconnell were actually translated by members of the Ukrainian community who were honored by the fact that Kirkconnell thought so highly of their work. Consistently, my sources named the actual translators who were supposedly exploited by Kirkconnell.

[12] Deposited in the Lorne Pierce Collection, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

[13] See Thomas M. Prymak, Maple Leaf and Trident (Toronto 1988) for a complete discussion of the issues.

[14] Kirkconnell was a regular contributor to the University of Toronto Quarterly, and since he was regarded as an authority in this new field of study, there was no challenge to his opinion. Just as Ryerson Press had placed faith in Lysenko's sponsors the University of Toronto Quarterly would have had little way of knowing whether Kirkconnell was showing prejudice in his "review".

[15] Deposited in the Lorne Pierce Collection, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

CHAPTER 3

The Turn to Fiction--Transitions in Genre and Cultural Identity

In writing her first novel, Lysenko pulled through the strands of her dual heritage and introduced something new into Canadian literature. Still the only English-Canadian novel to treat extensively the experiences of a second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian woman[1], Yellow Boots cross-stitches a pattern of themes common in English-Canadian prairie literature of the period with themes that are apparent in Ukrainian-Canadian literature. In more than one way, Lysenko's work challenges the existing canon of both parts of her dual heritage as she writes through the confrontation of her own ethnic past and progresses towards her particular vision of a multicultural Canada where there is "unity in diversity." Lysenko breaks down the barrier of language that rendered the already vast amount of Ukrainian-Canadian literature inaccessible to non-Ukrainian readers; at the same time, she dispels the negative stereotypical presentation of ethnic characters in English-Canadian literature. In writing Yellow Boots, Lysenko is boldly innovative as she draws together Ukrainian-Canadian and English-Canadian literature for the first time.

When Yellow Boots was published in 1954 over half a century had passed since the first Ukrainian immigrants settled in Canada, but the Ukrainian-Canadian literature that existed in the 1950's had not been translated into English. Much of the material produced in the first half of this century was created by immigrants of Ukrainian peasant stock who carried over their rich folklore and customs along with a tradition of a rural literature. While the early writers felt compelled to emphasize the new Canadian experience as they dealt with the impressions and realities of homesteading, Old World memories intruded as harsh adjustments had to be made in living in the New World. As a result, the themes conveyed in Ukrainian-Canadian literature are tied to the attitudes and historical antecedents of the Old World.[2]

The immigrant authors brought with them the knowledge of years of subjugation and oppression by foreign invaders, as well as the legacy of the Cossacks who loved liberty and the assertion of individualism. As a result, freedom is a major theme in Ukrainian-Canadian literature. Also, the early writers sought to compensate for the lack of national leadership by creating characters who would represent strength and leadership for the family as well as the community; thus, the significance of the patriarch for the clan became a prominent characteristic, particularly in the Ukrainian-Canadian novel. Other recurring themes include death or the preparation for death, as well as the importance of the soil and the hunger to hold land. Attached to this last theme is the realization of class distinction which transfers to the Canadian experience in various ways. While the ability to acquire land and work toward success as a property owner implies the notion of equal opportunity in Canada, the newcomers soon learned that the New World had its own class structure that placed immigrants and ethnic Canadians in a lower level despite their efforts to improve their situation and make a contribution to their new country.

Much was written by Ukrainian-Canadian authors concerning the various stages of the pioneering era in Canada, but most of the material was in the form of poetry, short stories, essays, and as an extension of the oral tradition, anecdotes and drama. The novel was a less popular genre because of the reality that many potential readers were semi-literate, as well as the fact that demands of pioneering life left little time to sit for an extended period to read a novel. To accommodate their literary appetites readers turned to newspapers and short works that were more portable and could be read quickly.

Despite the preference for other genres a few outstanding pioneer novels were produced. These longer works were a valuable addition to Ukrainian-Canadian literature because they were fictionalized chronicles of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. Onufryi Ivakk's HOLOS ZEMLI [Call of the Soil] (1937), Oleksander Luhovyi's BEZHATNYI-DITY STEPU [Homeless Children of the Prairie] (1946), and

Illia Kiriak's SYNY ZEMLI [Sons of the Soil],published between 1939-46, and considered to be "...a first attempt at an artistic generalization of the Ukrainian-Canadian pioneer experience" (Bandrauk 3) are three pioneer novels that predate Yellow Boots. These novels represent different aspects of the settlement of Ukrainians in Canada since the works concentrate on different phases of Ukrainian immigration. Of these early pioneer novels, Sons of the Soil is the most significant in Ukrainian-Canadian literature because it was written at the height of "Ukrainian writing on Canadian themes" and provides "the most complete fictionalized account of the first pioneers, a portrayal of their attitudes, ethics and world view" (Bandrauk 3). Written in three volumes, the English translation of Sons of the Soil, translated by Michael Luchkovich and abridged by Laura Goodman Salverson, appeared in print in 1959 after the publication of Yellow Boots. Thus, within the body of Ukrainian-Canadian literature, the novel has a unique place. In the first extensive study of this genre in Ukrainian-Canadian letters, Maria Inatieff Bandrauk points out how the actual situations of pioneering life gave rise to particular themes that were successfully blended with those carried over from the Old World as demonstrated particularly in Sons of the Soil and Yellow Boots.

Bandrauk also notes that because of the role played by Ukrainian women in Canada, the portrayal of strong women became a significant feature in the Ukrainian-Canadian novel. Unlike other immigrant groups, the Ukrainians relied heavily on "womanpower" for survival in the New World (Bandrauk 18). Ukrainian women not only worked beside the men, sparing the expense of a hired man they could not afford, but willingly assumed full responsibility when necessary. When financial need forced Ukrainian men into seasonal migration to bring in much needed cash (a situation that had often occurred in Ukraine and was being repeated in Canada) Ukrainian women readily took charge and ran the homesteads in the absence of their men:

> The distinctive feature of labour on the Ukrainian farm is the woman's share in it. 'Man must fight, woman must work, and overall is God," runs a Slavic saying, and if the history of the Ukrainians since they came to Canada is any indication of their past, they have strictly adhered to the idea in the second clause. For the women have worked! With their husbands they have hewed the home out of the bush, and they have managed the farm while he worked away from home...The woman's labour goes far to explain the undeniable progress of the Ukrainian farmer. (Young)

As Bandrauk asserts, on the larger Canadian landscape, the stalwart Ukrainian woman is given even more prominence, especially by Kiriak who "emphasizes her physical equality with her male counterpart" (19). But, in the Ukrainian-Canadian novel the woman's role goes beyond that of the strong worker. She also "takes on the role of defender of the faith and preserver of heritage and tradition" especially when dealing with the pressure to assimilate

(Bandrauk 19).

Bandrauk indicates that other themes spring from the desire to present the Ukrainians in a good light. The success story is common to all the novels, as is the presentation of homogeneous communities. The authors do not dwell on issues of prejudice against the Ukrainian settlers but try to concentrate on showing gratitude and allegiance to Canada. Cultural activity is highlighted with vivid accounts of rituals, festivals and folklore. Despite the actualities of genuine hardship, the novelists convey positive images. Even though life is a struggle, the focus is on strength, a rich cultural heritage, and success.

Bandrauk's study is helpful in determining not only the place of the novel in Ukrainian-Canadian literature, but also the place of Yellow Boots within that field. Among the four Ukrainian-Canadian novels of the soil, Yellow Boots is the only one to have been written in English by a second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian author. While Lysenko's novel shares much in common with the other Ukrainian-Canadian novels, there are departures from the standard themes as summarized by Bandrauk (see appendix). Because Yellow Boots does not conform completely to the features of the other Ukrainian-Canadian novels but incorporates qualities found in English-Canadian and French-Canadian agrarian novels, Bandrauk re-categorizes Lysenko's work as a Canadian-Ukrainian novel, a classification that still applies only to

Yellow Boots almost forty years after its original publication.

If Yellow Boots is to be regarded as a Canadian-Ukrainian novel, it is necessary to explore some of the features that distinguish it in this way. The novel does strongly represent the author's Ukrainian heritage. Indeed, the protagonist draws strength from her cultural roots and the vitality of her personal spirit and art are conveyed in the folksongs that she preserves. However, across the preliminary pattern of the Ukrainian-Canadian novel, Lysenko threads themes such as a search for identity, feminine emancipation, and artistic apprenticeship--themes common in English-Canadian prairie literature of the era (see also Bandrauk 52).

Just as Yellow Boots represents a change in the Ukrainian-Canadian novel, it also introduces a new vision into the larger body of Canadian literature. Although Lysenko was not the first Canadian author to write on immigrant or ethnic themes, her approach differed greatly from that of authors such as Ralph Connor, Frederick Philip Grove and Salverson whose fiction preceded Lysenko's.

Before Yellow Boots, Connor's The Foreigner (1909) was the first and only English novel to deal with the theme of Ukrainian immigration. Writing from the perspective of a Presbyterian minister who belonged to the dominant Anglo community, Connor displays not only a condescending attitude in The Foreigner but his work reeks of intolerance and strong prejudice. The Foreigner is riddled with errors in detail about the ethnic background of the characters whom Connor consistently links with the term "barbaric". Connor refers to Ukrainians as Galicians who are a potential threat to Canadian society: "These people here exist as an undigested foreign mass. They must be taught our ways of thinking and living, or it will be a bad thing for us in Western Canada" (Connor 255). However, Connor's Christian kindness does allow for their conversion from their superstitious, ignorant, filthy, foreign habits. The solution to the Galician "problem", as indicated in Connor's work, is to press them "to assimilate to the point where they could disappear as a separate group, if only they are treated properly and are provided with an education in British civilization" (Craig 32). Lysenko's work is a sharp contrast to Connor's damaging presentation of Ukrainian immigrants, and she moves Canadian literature to a higher level of understanding as she educates about her people through her novel Yellow Boots.

Looking beyond the literary injustices inflicted on her own ethnic group, Lysenko's view of the larger immigrant experience also differed from that of authors such as Grove and Salverson. Grove, one of the first Canadian authors to treat immigrants seriously in his works, was himself an immigrant. Although he had the advantage of an education and knowledge of the English language, Grove, like other immigrants, had to make adjustments to life in the New World. This afforded him the occasion to develop insight into the Anglo-Saxon attitudes and treatment directed at "foreigners". The inclusion of numerous immigrant characters in his works demonstrates Grove's sensitivity to issues that surrounded their struggle to become settled and accepted in Canada. Grove's defiance of the "romantic English-Canadian interpretation of settlement and assimilation" (Craig 57) thrust a revised portrayal of immigrants into Canadian literature. However, as Craig points out, although Grove was opening a new dimension in Canadian literature the author did so without moving much beyond the Anglo perspective:

> To Grove must be given the credit for breaking the English-Canadian monopoly in Canadian literature by validating the experiences of "aliens" as equal to those of charter-group Canadians in terms of their significance collectively as human beings. He did it largely from an assumed British point of view which he coated with enough layers of continental European sophistication that ingratiated him with the English-Canadians who suffered from a cultural inferiority complex. As far as Grove was concerned, humanity could be divided into two categories--austere pioneers working their land directly, and non-pioneer consumers dissipating their lives in luxuries. (Craig 57)

While Grove's work harmonized with the dominant view, Salverson, an Icelandic immigrant, injected yet a different impression of immigrants into Canadian literature. Salverson invoked the notion "that not all immigrants arrived humbly ecstatic about escaping from their home" (Craig 56). Through her works Salverson generates an awareness of the immigrants' historical and cultural ties with the Old World and challenges previous opinions that the newcomers were lacking culturally or intellectually. At times, however, Salverson conveys a negative tone that is complaining and resentful and contradicts the English-Canadian idea of downplaying hardships in the New World. Instead, her works represented

> the new voices of immigrants who could express themselves in English [and] complained volubly about the unsuitable land they had been given and the terribly hard living conditions they had to encounter. (Craig 56)

Like Salverson, Lysenko does not shy away from presenting a glimpse of pioneering hardships, but unlike Salverson, Lysenko refuses to dwell on this aspect of immigrant life (Craig 76). Instead of allowing bitterness to colour her work, Lysenko concentrates on educating readers about Ukrainian culture and folklore while promoting an awareness of the common bonds shared by all immigrants. Her vision transcends that of Grove or Salverson in that Lysenko progresses from the immigrant stage to the ethnic-Canadian contributing to the larger community. She was, after all, a second-generation Ukrainian Canadian, not an immigrant like Grove and Salverson. Born to immigrant parents and raised in a polyethnic community, Lysenko had first-hand knowledge of the immigrant experience; however, the reality that Canada was her homeland shaped her outlook and influenced her work.

The situation of growing up in an environment where Old World and New World values were constantly clashing caused Lysenko to search for resolution of the conflicts the second generation encounters when trying to establish their personal sense of identity. They are of the New World but the ties to the Old World that bind them at home cause real and perceived exclusion from acceptance as Canadians. In Men in Sheepskin Coats, Lysenko ponders the dilemma encountered by members of the second generation. She observes that: "There was too much of a difference in standards between the people of the first generation and the second" (MISC 239). At home the children of immigrants were directed by parents who "brought over the standards of impoverished European peasants, and their ways of living, ideas and psychological attitudes" (MISC 239). But the course of daily living required that the children interact with the larger Canadian community and they were exposed to a sharp contrast with the cultural value system upheld at home. As a result: "The children developed new standards from associations formed outside the home, new ideas from their school teachers which they found impossible to put into practice" (MISC 239). Lysenko elaborates on the issue:

> While admitting the admirable qualities of the pioneer, the younger generation cannot help but see that their life was narrow, constricted, ridden with ignorance and superstition.

> First of all, we of the second generation, children of Ukrainian immigrants, were intensely 'American' in our speech and manners. There were no evil spirits in our world. We had studied chemistry at school; physics, biology. We had moved with the times, much more rapidly than had our parents. What to them had been the mysterious workings of nature became the a, b, c's of school textbooks. For all our modernity, we were keenly conscious of our complex social and national background. About three generations back (1861) our ancestors had been serfs. That slavish psychology--instilled by decades of bowing before Russian and Polish Pahns--the psychology of hunted and persecuted races--we saw it cropping up in ourselves, and it was galling to us. (MISC 241)

Not only did second-generation Ukrainians have to overcome the prejudice directed at them, but they also had to deal with their own feelings of inferiority that arise from the inner uncertainties they experience. Lysenko articulates the core of the dilemma:

> This problem, then, faced us: which of our loyalties would we serve? Loyalty to the old traditions, to family customs, to religious and national institutions, or loyalty to the new--to our American training, environment, education, to our generation. (MISC 241)

Finding a solution to the problem was not easy. For some: "The immigrant community became intolerable as we sought for broader horizons" (MISC 242). They were sensitive to the fact that their ethnic heritage set them apart from other Canadians and they deplored any "reminders of our difference" (MISC 242). The traditions preserved in their homes "appeared only as superstitions, bitter reminders of our parents' peasant origin and inferior social status" (MISC 242). However, a "feeling of loyalty and obligation to our people kept many of us within the community, while at the same time driving us into a hostility and even bitterness toward the outside world, where racial prejudice was still too raw for us to combat it single-handed" (MISC 242). On the other hand, there were some of the second generation who "found our salvation by remaining within the Ukrainian community" (MISC 242). By delving into their heritage they were strengthened as they discovered "the extraordinary qualities of the Ukrainian people, a great original nation, the mother-lode of folklore and art for all Russia, where even the lowliest peasant was an artist, a composer, a creator" (MISC 242).

While they struggled with how they would deal with the Ukrainian part of their identity, there was the ever present reality that the second-generation were born Canadian. How could they adjust to the New World ways when they were surrounded by the Ukrainian atmosphere at home? There was no easy bridge between cultural differences of old and modern ways. Theirs was a generation "lost in the transition" (MISC 242). Their place was both in the Ukrainian community and the national Canadian community and they had to resolve the dilemma: "Since we of the second generation were to live in the new land, how were we to adapt ourselves?" (MISC 244). In response to this question, Lysenko offers the opinion of an unidentified prominent teacher:

> 'That is the solution for all of us--to be ourselves; to accept our dual inheritance as an advantage, not a handicap. I don't think it wise for us to become too quickly assimilated. You can't jump over centuries in one generation.' (MISC 244)

In the course of her own work, Lysenko is clearly practicing what is advocated in the above statement. In writing Men in Sheepskin Coats, she demonstrates her pride in her Ukrainian heritage as she documents the history of her people and establishes their place in the building of Canada. However, Lysenko's second major work, Yellow Boots, displays her steps toward resolution and transition as she focuses on a second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian woman, and cross-stitches together both her Ukrainian and Canadian heritages in telling the story of Lilli Landash. With Lilli, Lysenko progresses beyond mere resolution and establishes her identity as a Ukrainian-Canadian woman.

The structure of Lysenko's first novel complies with the expression of her dual inheritance. Although the chapters are arranged into six "parts", the plot actually develops in two stages. The first to the fifth sections of Yellow Boots are set in the Ukrainian pioneer settlement and concentrate on the Ukrainian aspects of both Lilli and Lysenko's Ukrainian heritage; Part Six is set for the most part in the city of Winnipeg and deals with the transitional and acceptance phases of the Canadian side of the two heritages. The first stage of the plot puts forward in extensive detail information about Ukrainian culture, tradition, and folklore: "Whole sections of Vera Lysenko's Yellow Boots are given over to the episodic chronicling of custom: 'The Pickling,' 'The Match Making,' 'The Wreath Plaiters,' 'The Marriage Rites,' 'The Easter Games,' and so forth" (Blodgett 91). Although some critics might see this as an intrusion into the fiction, the value of this information, especially for ethnographers, should not be disregarded. As Lysenko informs her reader, she establishes the foundation of her own and Lilli's art and identity. Both Lysenko and Lilli Landash do not reject their Ukrainian heritage as they advance beyond embracing it to acknowledging that this is the core of their being. Lilli, like Lysenko, does not surrender her ethnic identity in order to assimilate, but preserves her Ukrainian inheritance as she integrates into the larger community.

Throughout Yellow Boots, Lysenko draws together symbols and images representing both sides of her dual heritage and presents episodes that parallel the immigrant experience. In the novel's opening scene the almost dead child is being transported back to her father, Anton Landash. As she is rushed across the prairie on the jigger: "the land appeared like the sea, stretching out in every direction to the curved horizon" (YB 3). The voices she hears are "alien in accent" (YB 3); although Lilli is Canadian-born, English is an unfamiliar language when she hears it spoken by the section foreman and his companion, Ian MacTavish. Lilli's life is not much different from that of a serf in the old country. "She belongs to Anton Landash" (YB 4) and at the age of six was passed on to work for her aunt and uncle: "Take that one...She'll help you with the children and cost little to feed as she's small" (YB 9). Where Lilli's situation differs from that of the immigrant crossing the ocean to a foreign place with the hope of freedom and prosperity is that she is being sent home to die because her illness has rendered her useless:

> ...she had fallen ill and had shown signs of becoming a corpse. It was then that her aunt had delivered her to the old section-hand, to be returned, like a parcel of unsatisfactory goods, to her family. (YB 9)

While Lysenko presents this impression of a rejected child who is an alien in her own country, the author consistently threads together the Old and New Worlds. The railway is the symbol of the great linking of Canada from coast to coast, but as the jigger travels along the tracks, O'Donovan and MacTavish repeatedly catch glimpses of the Ukrainian pioneers. As they near the point when Lilli is to be turned over to her father, Lysenko injects the image of the two heritages side by side:

> Unexpectedly now, on the road which ran parallel to the railway, there appeared a fantastic procession, composed of four or five rough green wagons driven by oxen. These wagons were filled with men in sheepskin coats and women in leather boleros, long coloured skirts and white turbans. They were on their way to a silver-domed church on top of a smooth round hillock...
>
> The abrupt emergence of this primitive congregation in the midst of bare Manitoba prairie

> was like a mirage on the desert, and this resemblance was increased when the tarnished gold stubble was lit by the rays of the sun... 'They're like something out of a history book,' marvelled Ian MacTavish...'I have seen it--the very beginning of things!'... The two men gazed in silence at the scene, which was like a painting by some primitive artist wielding a huge brush and throwing colour from his palette in a kind of frenzy. Everything was exaggerated--the people, the music, the landscape. An excitement mounted in the hearts of the two men, a feeling that here was a phenomenon of peculiar import, part of the creative process of life itself. It was difficult to believe that this was the year 1929 in the new world. (YB 9-10)

When the foreman hands Lilli over to her father, Mike's genuine concern and gentle manner contrast sharply with the harshness of Anton Landash who retains Old World notions about the worth of "the puny girl child" (YB 17). Somewhat out of place in twentieth-century Canada: "Landash resembled more the hero of some mid-European operetta than a Canadian farmer..." (YB 12). The attitudes apparent as the transfer takes place are a reminder of the clash of Old World/New World values that will surround Lilli. Placing the child in her father's arms does not guarantee her the nurturing and protection that O'Donovan and MacTavish expect for children in Canada; instead, Lilli continues in a state of servitude imposed by Anton Landash. When she recovers from her illness, Anton insists that Lilli serve her family's needs, be used as a workhorse on the land, and even promises her in marriage to a repulsive man in exchange for a parcel of land. Anton regards Lilli more as chattel, or his serf, than his offspring, and he literally "cuts her out of the family picture" (*YB* 65).

Much of the generational and cultural conflict that occurs in *Yellow Boots* involves Lilli and her father. Anton was disappointed when she was born. He "had set his heart on a son--a tall, handsome fellow who would inherit the farm and further Landash's ambitions of becoming a great landowner" (*YB* 17). Anton's lust for land is an obsession that drives him towards one goal--status through acquisition. Lilli, however, takes an opposite position regarding the cult of the land. Lilli confesses that she "hates the land" (*YB*), but she enjoys a sense of oneness with nature and finds a kind of solace in the Canadian prairie that her father cannot comprehend.

Anton is the product of a brutal history in Ukraine; Lilli instinctively reaches out for the gentler life that is the promise of Canada. She longs to go to school like other Canadian children, and there is another parallel to the immigrant experience when Lilli does attend school for one day:

> The girl in the red calico dress, as she passed by, attracted him [Mactavish] particularly, because of the curious way in which she regarded every object in the classroom. Pausing before the blackboard, she rubbed her fingers across it stealthily. She touched other objects--pictures, desks, books. With a piece of red chalk, she scrawled on the blackboard. On her way to her seat, she sniffed the classroom air, a curious smell compounded of chalk, books, sawdust, lunches and bare feet. (*YB* 32)

Just as "Columbus now discovered America in the classroom..." (YB 36), so does Lilli discover the New World on her first day at school. Further reinforcement of the connection between the immigrant experience and the school scene occurs when MacTavish renames the students who are all called "Mary"; he also gives Lilli the name by which she becomes known (YB 35-36). This plays on the reality that when many Ukrainian immigrants arrived in Canada with Slavic names that the Anglo immigration officers found impossible to pronounce or spell, the Canadian authorities dubbed the immigrants with new names more acceptable to the dominant Anglo society (the phenomenon of the 1980-90's is that successive generations of descendants of the early immigrants are reclaiming the original Ukrainian names and legally changing their birth names to reflect their ethnic identity).

As well as acquiring a new name, Lilli learns to write that name in English. She savours every minute that she is in school, learning to sing songs such as "Annie Laurie", making friends with Vanni Karmaluke, and actually embracing the classroom globe while she exclaims, "I have whole world in my hands!" (YB 37). Lilli crosses the boundary between the isolation of the Ukrainian settlement and the open world of knowledge taught at school. Despite the fact that Anton denies her the opportunity to continue her formal education, Lilli retains the love of learning and the realization that there is a different life outside the settlement. She accepts her father's decision without bitterness and comes to recognize that Anton is dealing with his own inner struggle.

Lilli admires the fact that Anton tries to educate himself so that he can better assist his neighbours who are overwhelmed by the strange language and customs they encountered when they settled in Canada. His keen interest in science and agricultural advances is apparent and Lilli feels pride in her father's determination to update his knowledge and methods of working the land. She knows that Anton appreciates the freedom and opportunities available in Canada: "Yes, the new country is far better than the old..." (YB 68); but he has also carried over the memories of the brutal life he had known before he left his homeland (YB 68). His lust for land is a reaction to the cruelty he had suffered in the old country. Emotionally, Anton is crippled by the treatment that had been vetted by the "pans": "...Lilli caught a glimpse of the circumstances which had moulded his harsh character" (YB 68). This insight is what makes Lilli stronger than her father and in the end allows her to forgive him. Lilli knows that Anton is not an evil man. She has witnessed the great respect their community shows him; her mother has described him as a "'molodyetz' ...one who possessed audacity, courage, a zest for life. To be a 'molodyetz' was to have a special quality in meeting life..." (YB 57). This is the quality or inner spirit recognized by Mike when he delivers Lilli to her father. Although Anton and Lilli seem mismatched on the exterior, the foreman observes that father and daughter share a common spirit:

> He discovered that, despite their outward dissimilarity, there was an inner likeness between father and daughter--the intensity of feeling which both brought to the simplest phrase, the rhythm of their speech, the impression both gave of inner resources not easily exhausted. (YB 12)

Thus, Lysenko alerts her reader to the fact that Lilli's art, being and survival, are an extension of the ancient inheritance that she shares with her immigrant father.

The relationship between Lilli and Anton is significant. For the most part, Lilli suffers much emotional, verbal, and even physical abuse inflicted by her father. Anton's rejection of her at birth and his continued resentment toward Lilli results in her exclusion at home; her siblings mock her and even her mother regards her as an alien to the family. Anton does not treat Lilli with the same paternal protection that he shows her sister Fialka, and he has different expectations for the two girls. Anton regards Fialka's femininity as an asset; he assumes that her beauty and charm will win her a husband who will enhance the family's standing. With this in mind, Fialka is excused from hard labour; she is favoured with fine clothes and a hope chest. While Fialka enjoys companionship with her mother and the assignment of light duties, Anton forces Lilli to perform a man's job assisting him in the fields, dressed in boy's clothing. In the house, Lilli must carry out womanly chores, but there are no gender lines when her father needs the assistance of a hired man, Lilli is expected to oblige. This treatment and the low expectations for her future in the settlement engender in Lilli a desire to leave home someday. Unlike Fialka who looks forward to her own home and family with a provider within the Ukrainian community, Lilli's hope rests in the knowledge that someday she will make her own way in the city.

Early in her life, Lilli dreams of the move towards self-emancipation and independence. Anton's invocation of his Old World patriarchal authority when he attempts to force Lilli into a marriage she does not want is a major turning point in her life. For the first time, she contemplates defying Anton. She approaches MacTavish for advice: "What is law of Canada, Mr. Mac--must girl marry man her father choose?" (YB 200). With this question, Lilli acknowledges that she is of the New World and chooses to be subject first to the Canadian system of authority. Fortified by the knowledge that she does have freedom as an individual under Canadian law, Lilli takes the irreversible step of self-exile from the Ukrainian settlement and her family.

Lilli's departure from her home and journey to a new life in Winnipeg is the final parallel to the immigrant experience in Yellow Boots. When Lilli makes this move, she ventures into the larger Canadian community where she begins to explore and develop the Canadian side of her identity. In the city, Lilli witnesses the vastly different lifestyle and value system of the urban, Anglo-dominated society:

> In the city, thought Lilli, you couldn't see the sky except in bits and patches, shining here and there through the buildings. There was never a clear great view of its immensity, as on the prairie. People spoke of things, bank, job, car, factory, their language was clipped and mechanical. Things obtruded, houses and buildings and machines. Nobody ever stopped to look at cloud formations, only at shop windows, cars, other people. As they hurried down the street, frowning and tight lipped, they gazed with hostility at each other, or looked with anxiety at their own reflections in the plate glass windows, always this anxiety, as though misfortune were walking behind them, ready to tap their shoulder. (YB 211-212)

Nothing escapes Lilli's notice. She observes "how the city women walked, for example, with the light, almost dancing steps on their high heels, not heavily, with feet apart, like farm women; how they talked, laughed, dressed" (YB 212-213). It all seems so foreign to the girl who has known only the traditional ways in the Ukrainian settlement. For Lilli, things taken for granted by Canadians are grand discoveries:

> Lilli was amazed. 'People have special clothes for night time?' She held up the pajamas to herself and exclaimed: 'Wonderful to live in the city! Think, only three days here and so much I have learn already!' (YB 215)

She learns to enjoy many things unknown to her before, pleasures such as eating ice cream and socializing with other young people.

Lilli soon sees how another class lives in houses filled "with deep-piled carpets, upholstered furniture, massive mirrors, draperies, china, silver, in such quantities as to give an impression of magnificent bad taste" (YB 214). Through Lilli's experiences, Lysenko introduces into Canadian literature many of the realities the author knew herself as a second-generation Ukrainian-Canadian woman growing up in Winnipeg. Lysenko stimulates an awareness of the exploitation of immigrants and ethnic Canadians by pointing out in Yellow Boots that most of the domestics of the city were "girls from the country, like Lilli" (YB 211). A source of cheap labour for the dominant class, Lysenko cites that Lilli "appeared a grotesque little figure...with her coat--a gift from her mistress in lieu of her first month's wages--dragging to her ankles..." (YB 213). Lilli's employer, Mrs. Green, is not unlike other employers who dressed themselves and furnished their homes with great extravagance, and then "economized on one item...her maids' wages and their living quarters--Lilli slept in the basement and Maggie, the cook had a room in the attic" (YB 214). When Christmas arrives, Lilli's employer is heartless in her failure to allow Lilli time off:

> Lilli had looked forward to Christmas, hoping that she might find a Greek Orthodox church where she might attend the Christmas service. On Christmas Day, however, instead of having the day off, Lilli was set to clearing the snow off the walks, as Christmas Eve had been stormy. (YB 216)

Domestics received little or no consideration when it came to time for themselves. Their duty was to work without complaint. When Lilli leaves domestic employment to work in a garment factory, Lysenko emphasizes that the workers were mainly immigrants, or second-generation ethnic Canadians. Just as the railway had been built by immigrants who spent lonely months away from their families, often falling victim to injuries and even fatal accidents (YB 186-192), so was industry in Canada built with the labour of underpaid workers whose ethnicity placed them in the margins of Canadian society. Although conditions in Canadian factories were not as cruel as had been the case in the Old World, the well-being of the worker was not as important as a good rate of production. Lysenko notes in the chapter "Factory Rhythms" that social gatherings were encouraged in the factory lunchroom more for the benefit of the company than the workers:

> The owner of the factory, considered one of the most progressive men in the business, encouraged this social life, since he felt it raised the morale of his workers, and consequently, their productivity. (YB 259)

But the exploitation by the mainstream of Canadian society who were economically privileged is not the only injustice that Lysenko puts forward in her first novel. Lysenko calls attention to the prejudice and even harassment directed at those who appear "foreign." Lilli's thrill in the newness and discovery of city life is not without incident. Although there were some passersby who "laughed indulgently" (YB 213) as they observed the delight and wonderment apparent when Lilli is overwhelmed by her discoveries in the city, there were others who exhibited the ugliness of prejudice:

> Her revery was shattered by the laughter of two callow youths who came up behind her to watch her as she moved her head back and forth before the window... 'Hey, Mary,' they cackled, bursting with their own wit, "Hey, Mary, it's not Hallowe'en. Go back to the farm.' Lilli turned to face them and replied with dignity, 'My name is Lilli, not Mary.' At this, the young men guffawed more uproariously than ever...' The little girl is wearing a coat too big,' commented one woman to her companion as they passed by. (YB 213)

By including such scenes, Lysenko is awakening her readers to the reality that intolerance and ethnocentrism exist in Canada and should not be condoned. Just as Lilli must confront her own ethnic past as she moves on to develop her own identity as a Canadian, so must Canada recognize the contributions of people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds as the country establishes a sense of national identity.

In Part Six of Yellow Boots, Lilli completes her transition and the resolution of her dual nationality, and Lysenko also comes to terms with her own sense of her Canadian heritage as she vividly presents her vision of a multicultural Canadian society in this final section of the work. In "Builders of the City," which introduces this last part, the author projects a powerful image full of meaning as she describes what Lilli sees upon arrival in Winnipeg:

> ...Faces on the streets of the city could provide a study in racial contrasts, for the population

> was one of the most cosmopolitan on the continent --Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Icelanders from the great Northern lakes, Scottish Canadians, Metis, Mennonites, Hungarians, even gypsies. These people, through living together, through vital experiences shared--marriages, births, deaths, the land, harvests--dreamed common dreams, forged common bonds, built the foundations of the city. It was full of longing young people, aching with the ache of youth for life, trying to find themselves here in the city of the plains, not quite of the old world and yet not entirely accepted by the new. (YB 211)

Throughout the last part of Yellow Boots, there are several reminders that: "Each person, as I said is at heart an immigrant" (YB 231). Lysenko conveys the notion that the common bonds of life experience tie all groups in Canada together and the sharing of these common experiences can bring "unity in diversity."

In filling out the design of her novel, Lysenko works her own vision into the story of Lilli Landash. Lysenko believed that in order to secure the sense of one's identity it is necessary to confront one's ethnic past and then retain that heritage while moving out into the larger community. She agreed strongly with the admonition of the Ukrainian bard, Taras Shevchenko, that Ukrainians should learn about foreign cultures but not forget their own. Through the protagonist, Lilli, Lysenko personifies this ideal. By casting Lilli in the role of a singer or artist, Lysenko uses song as a device by which minorities can be given voice. Through song, Lilli is able to preserve her own rich cultural background while sharing it with others, and then going on to learn and sing their songs. This is one way in which diverse ethnic groups could learn to live together with mutual respect.

Just as Lilli uses her vocal talents to blend together her dual heritage and communicate her message of Canadian unity, Lysenko uses her literary skills and the English language to preserve her Ukrainian heritage and make a contribution to Canadian literature.

Notes

[1] According to Dr. Frances Swyripa, Anna Veryha by Gloria Kupchenko Frolick has just been published (late fall 1992); however, the author of this thesis wrote this chapter prior to release of Kupchenko Frolick's work and is not able to obtain a copy, at this time, for examination and verification of contents.

[2] See Maria Ignatieff Bandrauk, "Third Image: A comparative study of the Ukrainian-Canadian, French-Canadian, and English-Canadian novels of the soil" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Bishop's University 1981) for a more complete discussion of the Ukrainian-Canadian novel.

CHAPTER 4

Another Pattern

With the publication of Yellow Boots, Lysenko seemed to be on her way to success as a Canadian writer. Her first novel received good reviews from Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian critics. In Saturday Night the reviewer declared: "This is without serious question one of the best novels ever written by a Canadian"[1] Within the Ukrainian community, M. Luchkovich not only applauded Lysenko's work but went so far as to send a copy of his review to Lysenko's nemesis, Watson Kirkconnnell, who commented in his letter of reply: "I have not seen this book yet but find your enthusiasm contagious."[2] Finally, it appeared that Lysenko was to experience a positive turn in her life as she continued writing on multicultural and proto-feminist themes.

In 1956 Westerly Wild was published by the Ryerson Press. A letter sent to Lysenko by Lorne Pierce indicates that she did not wait for public reaction to Yellow Boots before completing her second novel. In his letter dated March 7, 1955,[3] Pierce writes:

> Dear Miss Lysenko:
> You have already heard from us, and know that your manuscript Westerly Wild has been accepted for publication. Owing to the fact that your recent book is still heading our list, we have decided to delay publication until the spring, but commence at once to find a proper House to take it in Great Britain and the United States, and also plan for serial rights. It is essential, therefore, that we should have the revised manuscript in our hands just as soon as you can

> manage it.
>
> The manuscript is a very good one, and all the judges were agreed that it should be published when revised. Your work shows a steady improvement, and we feel sure that you will go a long way as a Canadian novelist.
>
> ...
>
> You have pulled off a book of real distinction, and one has the feeling that if more time had been given it, if it had been studied and pruned more, you might easily have had an Award winner.
>
> Cordially yours,
> Lorne Pierce

Obviously, Pierce had high expectations for Westerly Wild. Along with extensive comments regarding the text, Pierce includes: "Your story is a sort of Canadian Wuthering Heights."[4] As senior editor, Pierce encouraged Lysenko as she explored issues beyond the Ukrainian experience without conforming to the dominant Anglo culture. She had produced innovative material for her publishers and their support for her work was strong.

Written in the tradition of the gothic novel, Westerly Wild at first appears to be quite different from Yellow Boots. In Westerly Wild, the protagonist, Julie Lacoste, is an urban schoolteacher of mixed-ethnic background (she is the offspring of a Polish mother and a French-Canadian father), who migrates from the city to assume teaching duties in rural Saskatchewan during the dustbowl of the 1930's. Soon after Julie arrives in Fair Prospect, she meets and falls in love with Marcus Haugen, a mysterious and prosperous landowner who is an outsider to the community. The romance dominates the plot but collapses at the end because of a Jane Eyre twist of events; at the point when Julie and her lover are to be married, she discovers that Marcus has been hiding a mad wife in the attic.

Despite the apparent emphasis on romance, and the inclusion of several melodramatic scenes as Julie attempts to resolve the intense passion she feels for Marcus, Lysenko does convey deeper messages in Westerly Wild, as she did in Yellow Boots. Just as Lilli was a force for unity in Yellow Boots, so is Julie in Westerly Wild. The schoolteacher in a mostly immigrant community struggling to survive in desperate times, Julie draws the people together by encouraging them to explore and enjoy their ethnic diversity. Lysenko's vision of inter-ethnic harmony in Canada is expressed when Julie unifies the community by prompting each person to share their ethnic heritage while learning about the cultural backgrounds of their neighbours. In the same way that Lilli uses song, Julie uses her skills as a teacher to create and strengthen the bonds of shared experience.

In Westerly Wild Lysenko treats several themes and issues similar to those in Yellow Boots, but in her second novel, the Old World-New World conflicts are replaced by urban-rural tensions, the struggle of man versus nature, and the ever-present sense of East-West alienation. Set in a multi-ethnic agricultural community in drought-stricken Saskatchewan in the 1930's, Westerly Wild demonstrates, once more, Lysenko's keen sense of history. Clearly Lysenko's concern is with the poor and the working class as the novel deals with the struggle for survival within the hard-hit community. The wind, the drought, and the dust take on symbolic meaning while the prairie becomes "almost a character in its own right."[5] Just as she gave voice to the immigrants and ethnic Canadians in Yellow Boots, Lysenko jars the reader with the reality of the devastation encountered by the mostly immigrant farmers who are faced with the natural disaster of drought. Their pain as they try to cope with loss of livelihood and the demoralizing effects of charity are presented with convincing sensitivity that the reader comes to understand the tragic dimensions of this historic moment.

Again writing a little ahead of her time, Lysenko also addresses issues that until then were largely ignored in Canadian literature. Stirred by her love of children, she does not shy away from depicting the deprivation suffered by the young who are caught in the tensions caused by the despair of their parents and the hostility of nature. Neither does she avoid the topic of child abuse.

Early in the novel, Lysenko introduces the character Katie Corry who is regarded as a delinquent by the entire community. At first, even the schoolteacher, Julie Lacoste, is distressed by Katie's behaviour: "The problem of Katie Corry was threatening to develop into a major concern for

Julie." (WW 65). Instead of dwelling on the negatives of Katie's behaviour, Lysenko uses the observations of the schoolteacher to put forward the idea that Katie is a troubled child who does possess some positive qualities. Julie notes Katie's obvious desire to keep returning to school despite the lack of acceptance by the other pupils and her father's discouragement, and the teacher recognizes Katie's potential:

> When left alone, the girl had an ability to apply herself that might have led to good results if it had been allowed its natural development, instead of being thwarted and cramped at every impulse upward. (WW 124)

Throughout much of the novel, Julie agonizes about Katie's situation and is frustrated because there are limits to what she, as a teacher, can do to help the child. Katie is surrounded by a society that is not prepared to intervene or offer support; instead, the only acknowledgement that Katie receives from the community is their scorn. Caught up in their own despair and feelings of failure, the community "try to revenge themselves by getting back at someone" (WW 133), and Katie is vulnerable because of her reputation:

> Katie hasn't anyone to defend her, so anyone can attack her with impunity. There's no greater incentive to malice for human beings. If they see a defenceless woman in a compromising situation, they'll fall on her and tear her to pieces. And of course it's had a harmful effect on Katie's behaviour. Subject any person, no matter how well-adjusted, to a constant barrage of ridicule, and he'll become warped and bitter. (WW 133)

Lysenko shows that Katie is doubly victimized, first by her abusive father and then by a community that judges Katie and does not come to terms with the fact that her behaviour is the direct result of the abuse suffered over the years. Lysenko's insight into the problem is evident, and the fact that she devotes so much of the novel to Katie's story demonstrates her determination to draw public attention to a pressing social concern.

Along with the issue of child abuse, Lysenko injects another matter about which she had personal knowledge and strong feeling. With great conviction, she believed that the system of mental health care in Canada was in serious need of reform. In fact, her notebooks and personal papers contain much evidence which indicates that she was collecting information to write a major piece exposing the horrors encountered by patients who were supposedly receiving treatment. However, at the time she was writing, it was difficult to discuss the issue because of prevailing attitudes. Mental illness was considered an embarrassment or a cause for shame. Nevertheless, Lysenko works the topic into the plot of Westerly Wild. Near the beginning of the novel, she introduces the subject in a conversation between Julie and Bertha Schnabel, the schoolteacher in a neighbouring town. As they discuss the pitiful situation of the families in Fair Prospect, Bertha suddenly adds, "They're hollering about mental ill-health in Canada, and they don't seem to realize that a walloping investment in prevention would be wiser and cheaper than cure [sic]" (WW 39). The notion that financial security, good diet, and an education which includes exposure to the arts leads to mental well-being is put forward by the teachers as they contemplate the grim circumstances of their pupils' lives.

As the plot reaches the main crisis, the inclusion of Haugen's mad wife serves more than a dramatic purpose as it provides Lysenko with an opportunity to delve further into the issue of mental health care. Haugen attempts to justify secluding his wife in the attic by describing the conditions found in an institution:

> "Julie, I have never seen anything like it. The wards were crowded, and women were standing in groups, hopelessly looking into space. The despair of it, the loneliness, the lack of any kind of warmth or personal care...Have you any idea, Julie, how overcrowded our mental hospitals are? Those hopeless throngs, walking, walking, walking, those long, dim corridors, humans who'll never be restored to society, a handful of doctors to take care of a thousand patients!" (WW 261-262)

By including this passage, Lysenko's fiction deliberately calls attention to the situation in Canadian mental hospitals.

As I indicate above, to read Westerly Wild strictly as a piece of gothic fiction would be a serious mistake. All of Lysenko's works are based on personal experiences and are a means for airing concerns that she felt were important. She was an author with a strong social conscience, and her personal writings indicate that her goal was to use her literary skills to arouse the consciousness of her readers and initiate changes in Canadian social attitudes. The plots in her novels are actually the canvas on which she stitches what to her were the more important designs of social reform. Each of her novels is meant to promote the ideals for which she was striving while informing the reader about issues of substance.

Although Westerly Wild was Lysenko's last published work, she did not stop writing. Shortly after the publication of her second novel, the CBC aired (January 1957) her radio play about Ivan Franko, the renowned Ukrainian writer. As she experimented with another genre, she dipped back into her Ukrainian heritage knowing that her audience was now different and greater in number; she wanted to seize the opportunity to further advance the awareness of her people. Then, suddenly, Lysenko moved to Edmonton in 1959, where she entered nursing school but left before obtaining her certificate. Having decided that she did not want to develop a career in nursing, Lysenko began teaching English at night school in order to support herself. Although Lysenko's sister asserts that she does not know why Lysenko made the choice to re-locate in Edmonton after spending many years in Eastern Canada pursuing her writing career, there is indication in the author's personal papers that she went to Edmonton to provide support for her brother, Peter, who was in a state of personal crisis. She could not abandon him in a time of need. Since she loved

Peter like a son, she was willing to make sacrifices for his well-being.

When Peter's situation was under control, Lysenko moved back to Toronto hoping to re-establish herself as a serious writer. Instead, she fell into difficult times because of health problems and the fallout of the Kirkconnell episode. Despite the fact that years passed and she had published two successful novels, Lysenko was unable to obtain financial support for her work because of the taint of the allegations regarding her politics. She became reclusive but continued to work in her state of isolation until 1965 when her mother died and she returned to Winnipeg to care for her father.

For three years, Lysenko served as her father's housekeeper until his death in 1968. During that period, she corresponded with her married sisters; her letters to her sister Olga provide tremendous insight into Lysenko's personality.[6] She expresses gratitude for what her sister has done to assist her; no gift or financial contribution goes unacknowledged. Her letters display a tremendous sense of humour as she describes her attempts to coax her father with special meals, her joy in feeding cookies to the neighbourhood children who started to call her "Auntie", and her amusement with the physical changes she experienced as her once limber body took on the challenges of her middle years. But as in her public writing, her sense of history also springs forth as she records the daily events in

Winnipeg, and she shows no shyness regarding her pride in Canada when she writes about Winnipeg hosting the Commonwealth Games.

Although she had temporarily made her father's care the first priority in her life, Lysenko did not abandon her personal need to write. She continued to work at various projects, most of which remain unpublished and rest in the Lysenko Papers in the National Archives of Canada. The collection indicates that during the last decades of her life, Lysenko was both a prolific and versatile writer. Among the manuscripts in the Lysenko Papers are two plays, The Lady and the Pooks (a musical) and Margaret Scott--The Angel of Poverty Row, based on the true story of Margaret Scott who, after the death of her socially prominent husband, became one of the first public health nurses to Winnipeg's poor. (A note of interest is that one of the characters in the play is Rev. Gordon, who was actually Ralph Connor). The collection also contains two autobiographical manuscripts The Torch and Rooted Sorrow, and although the works are undated, my research indicates that Lysenko was working on The Torch in 1959. A letter written to her that year by R.B. Russell mentions that he lent her books and materials concerning the General Strike for a book that she was writing. Since The Torch contains chapters dealing extensively with events surrounding the General Strike it is probably safe to assume that the autobiographical piece was the work in progress to which Russell refers.

Also in the collection is an unpublished novel, School (1973), which is possibly Lysenko's last complete major work. Shortly before her death in 1975, her publishers had given her an advance on a novel that she was to revise for publication.[7] Whether the intention was to publish School or one of the autobiographical novels is unknown. However, of the material that actually bears dates, School is dated closest to the time of Lysenko's death. School presents again issues advanced in Lysenko's two earlier novels. The protagonist is Amanda Prescott, a successful journalist who has suffered a major breakdown after a failed relationship. As a journalist, Amanda was based in the United States, but after her breakdown moves to Canada and makes a career change to become the headmistress at a school in Manitoba. Much like Julie in Westerly Wild, Amanda becomes involved with her pupils who are of multi-ethnic backgrounds. While there is a recurrence of many concerns such as child abuse, poverty, and mental health, School goes further than the previous works in developing a feminist theme:

> Women in America are now going out of the home into teaching and education and journalism and nursing, and they are beginning to leave the confines of secure homes in order to participate in an enthralling adventure" (School unnumbered page second to last).

While Lysenko is obviously attempting to make the issues of her earlier work contemporary, she still weaves a pattern common to all her fiction. The structure of School conforms to the design of Lysenko's earlier novels which all begin with the protagonist migrating to rural locations and end with a return home. The protagonists are all single women who display greater strength of character than the men in the novels, and in the published and the unpublished works, it is the woman who not only survives but makes the choices that determine her destiny. Only in Yellow Boots is there the suggestion that the protagonist will marry Reiner, but the union does not take place within the novel. Other common traits in Lysenko's works are the themes of isolation and exile, the important role of the teacher and artist, and a reverence for nature.

When Lysenko's work is examined in the context of her life experience, it is apparent that she stitched the private realities into her public writing. Like the heroines in her texts, Lysenko was determined not only to survive but to achieve her goals. Despite frequent hospitalization, a lack of support, and final years enduring extreme financial distress, Lysenko persevered and refused to abandon her literary objectives. She spent the final years of her life in seclusion but did not falter in her dedication to her writing. In October, 1975, in Toronto, Lysenko died believing that the recognition of her contribution to the history of Ukrainians in Canada and to Canadian literature that eluded her in life would someday be realized. The critical work necessary to honour and explore Lysenko's work is just beginning and thus a conclusion is premature.

Notes

[1] Taken from dustjacket of Westerly Wild.

[2] Deposited in the Luchkovich Collection, Ukrainian Canadian Archives and Museum of Alberta, Edmonton. I am grateful to Jars Balan and Myron Momryk for passing along this information.

[3] Published in The Canadian Author & Bookman--Centennial Series-3, Vol. 43, No.1, Autumn, 1967,(8-9).

[4] Letter to Lysenko from Lorne Pierce, March 7, 1955.

[5] See letter Lorne Pierce, March 7, 1955.

[6] I am grateful to Mrs. Olga Vesey for having shared her sister's letters with me.

[7] I am grateful to Miss Elizabeth Hudson for giving me this information in a personal interview, Ottawa, October 1986.

Epilogue

Lysenko's voice has called to me throughout the years when I was coming to terms with my own dual inheritance. It began with a whisper and then became an anthem that kept me faithful to my task. She is for me the personification of the Ukrainian spirit that will not die, but roots itself and grows in our Canadian soil. I regret that she is not here and cannot share the excitement as she is re-discovered by a new generation. Yellow Boots is again in print, and production has begun on a musical children's version of Lilli Landash's story. I would not have imagined these things when I began to pick up the pattern of her life and works, but yet I think that she would not be at all surprised. Among her papers, I found the following passage, and since this has been Lysenko's story, I yield to her the final words.

Then You'll Remember Me

You think you have killed me and my soul and my words forever? But from the slumberous underground arises the voice of the murdered, those whom you killed in your mad haste and greed, and the noble cities you defiled cry out to be made into realities, and the poets you silenced have left behind their lament in writings, and the music I heard in my childhood will never be forgotten, until at last a great composer will cry out in vengeance, and will make a great noise unto the host of those who follow in my footsteps, and his triumphal chords will equal even the great Beethoven, and the paintings which were dreamed of in the soul of a common house painter will be made into a canvas which will arouse the new generation, and those who moved in my neighborhood attired in the gorgeous raiment of my fantasies will live and will remain a permanent part of the attire and thought and nobility and greatness of a country which I helped to found and to immortalize and my genius will be sung in schools and universities, and as you sing my songs and remember my words and think of how I walked among you, you will weep because you did not heed my pleas for assistance, and as you recall my pain and my tortures and suffering as I lay helpless in my dark room amid the thick silence of indifference, you will indeed remember me...(TT 640)

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Men in Sheepskin Coats: A Study in Assimilation. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947.

Rooted Sorrow. ts. Lysenko Papers. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa. n.d. Access is restricted. An autobiographical novel. This typescript deals with the middle age years of the author. Almost 500 pages in length, most pages are numbered, although there are unnumbered insertions. This does not appear to be finally revised copy.

School. ms. Lysenko Papers. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Author indicates began in 1973 and completed in 1974. Access is restricted. (see Chapter Four of this thesis for descriptive details)

The Torch. ts. Lysenko Papers. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa. n.d. Access is restricted. An autobiographical novel. This typescript is over 600 pages in length. Most pages are numbered, some insertions. Pages 256-289, 315, 323-327 contain poems that interrupt the flow of the prose and seem to be out of place. This autobiographical novel presents the Lesik family history and the author's early years up to the point of convocation from the University of Manitoba. The Torch appears to be a near final draft requiring some editing. Although the typescript is undated, my research indicates that the author was doing research for this work in 1959. (see Chapter Four of this thesis for details)

They Came from Cossack Land. ts. Privately held by Peter Krawchuk. Author's unpublished typescript published in 1947 entitled Men in Sheepskin Coats. (see Chapter Two of this thesis for details)

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APPENDIX

Bandrauk's Summary of Standard Themes in the Ukrainian-Canadian Novel

1. Predominance of the success story of Ukrainian survival and prosperity on Canadian soil.

2. New-found optimism and abandonment of defeatist tone prevalent in pre-immigrant Ukrainian literature.

3. Follow a long tradition of the sacred cult of the soil.

4. Depiction of closely knit homogeneous society. Consequently, the main conflict is family infighting and community conflict over property, church affairs and politics, all within the Ukrainian-Canadian society, rarely with the English-Canadians.

5. Blind eye to prejudice.

6. (Kyriak especially) working out a new social order. In Canada there is a levelling out of inequalities.

7. All four novels express allegiance to Canada and gratitude. Stress pride in Ukrainian culture and traditions and stubborn resistance to assimilation.

8. Heroes and heroines accepted but not assimilated into Canadian milieu.

9. Emphasis on success story i.e. idealism as opposed to realism.

10. Tone down brutality because they do not want to reflect negatively on the Ukrainian people.

11. Hardship does not leave permanent scars.

12. Insecure in that there is the need to show their people making good.

13. Ideal image of the strong woman despite depiction of traditional patriarchal society.

14. True free spirits are the women who give men lessons in power, defiance, initiative. Women are the primary symbols of Ukrainian vitality.

15. Absence of a distinct Canadian landscape. Instead the concentration is on the inner social landscape and family hearth. Only Lysenko has succeeded in capturing the uniqueness and hostility of the Canadian landscape, but also she is the only one to condemn the cult of the soil and servitude to the land. Lysenko follows patterns seen in English-Canadian and French-Canadian novels of the soil.

16. Stylistic problems for first-generation authors. Ukrainian-Canadian novel repeatedly goes against prevailing patterns of English-Canadian and French-Canadian counterparts therefore is something distinct. (Bandrauk 229)